Consumption of furniture and furnishings for the home in the West Midlands using local suppliers 1760-1860

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This work or any part thereof has not previously been presented in any form to the University or to any other body whether for the purposes of assessment, publication or for any other purpose. Save for any express acknowledgements, references and /or bibliographies cited in the work, I confirm that the intellectual content of the work is the result of my own efforts and of no other person.

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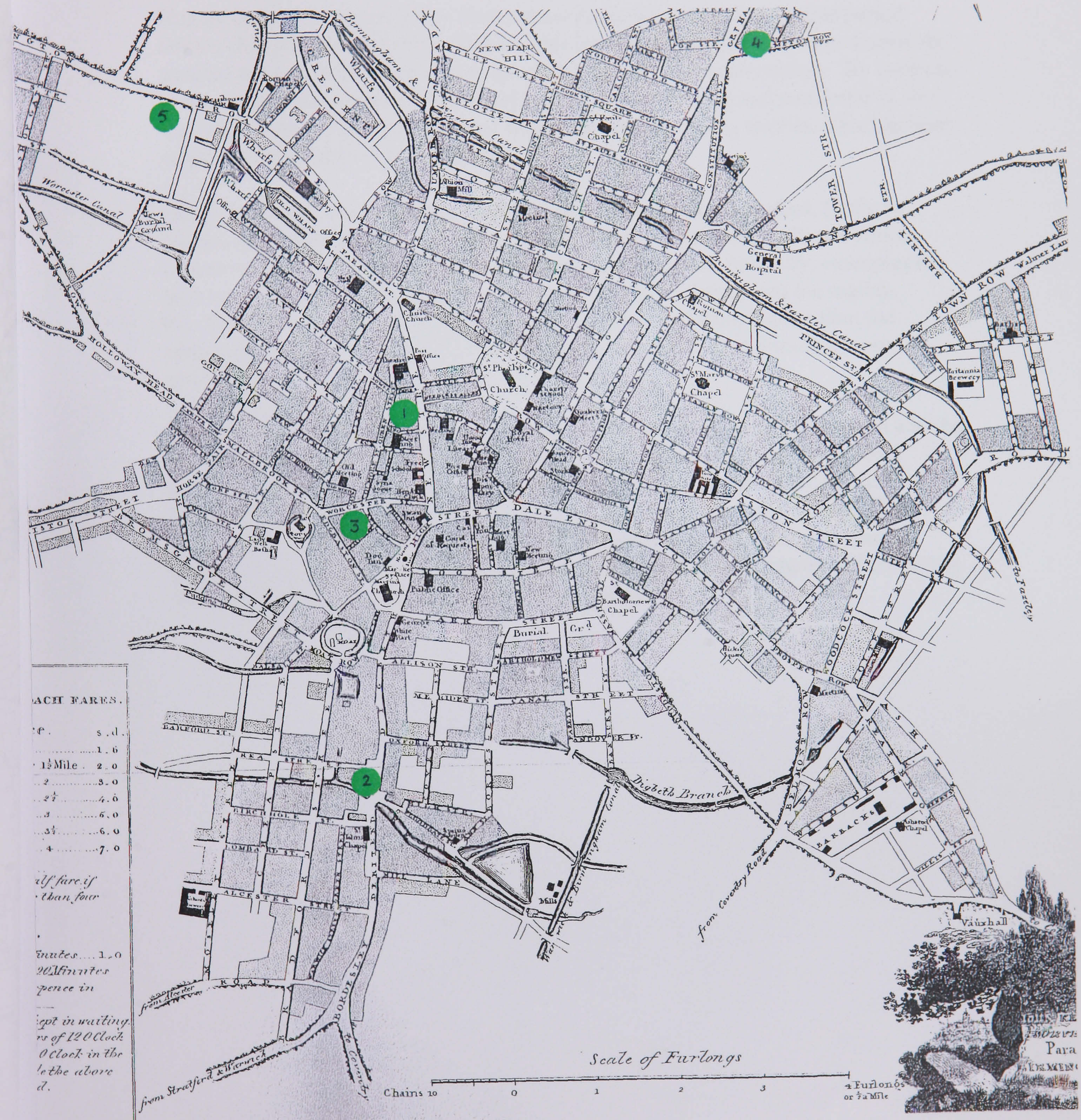
Map 1 The West Midlands
(The green dots mark the towns which feature in chapter 2)

Bartholomew, J.G. (ed) (1898), *Citizens Atlas of the World*, London: George Newnes


CHESTER
Trafford
Barrow
Kelsall
Tarvin
Lit Budworth
Christleton
Duddon
Clotton
Tarporley
Saighton
Aldford
Farndon
Holt
REXHAM
Malpas
Overton
Part of FLINT
Whitchurch
Penley
Hammer
Ferns Bank
Bettisfield
Whixall
Wem
Cockshutt
Redhall
Petton
Middle
Clive
Ruyton
Yorton
Shawbury
Baschurch
Preston Gubbals
Bess
Leaton
Pitts
Shrawardine
Alberbury
Ford
Cardeston
Yockleton
Asterley
Harwood
Bertington
Heales Rd
Pontesbury
Minsterley
Stapleton
Habberley
Dorrington
SHROPSHIRE
Pickles Cote
Longnor
Leebotwood
Rallinghope
Church Stretton
Wentnor
Marsh Brook
Eaton
Harton
Rushbury
Hope Bowdler
Longville
Carding ton
Caratoc H.
Hughes
Presthope
Burton
Acton Round
Easthope
Shipton
Monk Hopton
Long Stanton
Ditton Priors
Bridgnorth
Eardington
Quatford
Morville
Claverley
Worfield
Hilton
Penn
Gospel End
Sedgley
Wombourne
Tipton
Hinley
DUDLEY
Oldbury
BIRMINGHAM
Smethwick
Walsall
Darlaston
Bilston
WOLVERHAMPTON
Willenhall
Bushbury
Wednesfield
Patshull
Tettenhall
Patshull Park
Badger
Beckbury
Codsall
Albrighton
Shifnal
Brewood
Tong
Stirchley
Madeley
Madeley Court
Coalbrookdale
Ironbridge
Broseley
Much Wenlock
Willey
Linley
Buildwas
Leighton
Wroxeter
The Wrekin
Lawley Bank
Horsehay
Dawley
Wellington
Walcot
Ercall
Aston
Lubstre
Oakengates
Trench
Hadley
Admaston
Upton Magna
Withington
Rodington
Sundorn
Eyton
Preston
Lilleshall
Donnington
Woodcote
Church Eaton
Edgmond
Newport
Chetwynd
Gt Magna
Norbury
Forton
Gnosall
Haughton
Coppenhall
Bradley
Durston
Bednall
Blymhill
Lapley
Stretton
Weston
Penkridge
Cannock
Chase
LICHFIELD
Burntwood
Hammerwich
Wyrley
Shareshill
Brownhills
Pelsall
Bloxwich
Rushall
Aldridge
Blakenall
Fazeley
TAMWORTH
Whittington
Elford
Shenstone
Stonnall
Sutton Park
Sutton Coldfield
Penns
Wishaw
Erdington
Tyburn
Harborne
Kingstanding
Perry Barr
Handsworth
Aston
Castle Bromwich
Hockley
Soho
Smethwick
Oldbury
Tipton
Dudley
Sedgley
Gospel End
Penn
Wombourne
Hinley
Swan Vil.
Newton Rd
Barr
Erdington
Quatford
Ditton Priors
Long Stanton
Monk Hopton
Shipton
Rushbury
Hope Bowdler
Church Stretton
Wentnor
Marsh Brook
Eaton
Harton
Longville
Carding ton
Caratoc H.
Hughes
Presthope
Burton
Acton Round
Easthope
Morville
Claverley
Worfield
Hilton
Badger
Beckbury
Patshull
Tettenhall

Map 2 Birmingham
(The numbered green dots mark the areas described in chapter 2)

Wrighton's New Triennial Trade Directory of Birmingham, 1818 **(1969), Newcastle upon Tyne: Frank Graham**



ABSTRACT

Using a framework of design history and theories of consumption, the production, ownership and use of furniture and furnishings is examined, to obtain an understanding of the material culture of the home, its physical reality and cultural meaning.

Homes during the period 1760-1860 are the focus for study. During this period homes changed considerably. At the outset interiors were relatively bare despite the gradual accumulation of consumer goods during the eighteenth century. By contrast, at the close of the period interiors had become more crowded and comfortable, this was mainly due to the increased use and the methods of using textiles. This has been called the feminisation of interiors.

How social and cultural changes affected provincial homes is studied, firstly by analysing the furniture trade for a number of towns in the West Midlands which experienced different social and commercial development. Secondly, examples of homemaking are examined using consumers who lived throughout the region. Provincial taste of the middling sort is the main focus of study, rather than the metropolitan and élite forms of consumption which have often attracted more attention.

Sources are utilised which span the period 1760-1860 to allow the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries to be treated in a similar fashion, emphasising the gradual evolution of social and cultural developments. Four factors are identified as influencing consumer choice; location, class, lived experience and gender. Rather than making use of quantitative analysis, which produces generalised averages, qualitative analysis is used which prioritises consumers as individuals and allows the symbolic meanings of homemaking to be explored.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRL	Birmingham Reference Library Archives, Birmingham
CRO	Coventry Record Office, Coventry
SRO	Shropshire Record Office, Shrewsbury
LJRO	Lichfield Joint Record Office, Lichfield
StRO	Staffordshire Record Office, Stafford
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew, London
WRO	Worcestershire Record Office, St Helen's, Worcester
VCH	The Victoria History of the Counties of England, London: University of London, Institute of Historical Research and Oxford University Press.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Studies of the domestic environment can take a variety of forms with the emphasis placed on different aspects of the word 'home'. Interest in the physical reality of homes in different periods and in different geographical areas has a long history with developments reflecting current social, cultural and political ideas.[1] Academia began to address the history of ordinary people's lives, including their homes, more seriously from the 1960s with the growth of social history and, later, of women's history.[2] From the 1970s there has been an increasing trend towards making social and cultural history accessible outside academia through various forms of 'living history'[3] in which representations of the domestic environment have played a prominent part. For example, museums, film and television have all participated in projects which have aimed to recreate homes of the past,[4] partly for educational purposes but also in a response to the public's fascination with the daily lives of people in the past. The notion of 'authenticity' is prominent in such re-creations; to

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[1]For example the research for Hermann Muthesius' *The English House* was sponsored by the Prussian Board of Trade to gather ideas to take back to Germany. N. Pevsner (1988), *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* [1936], Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 144.

[2]For example E.P. Thompson (1963), *The Making of the English Working Class,* London: Victor Gollancz; S. Delamont and L. Duffin (eds) (1978), *The 19th Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World,* London: Croom Helm; Sandra Burman (ed.) (1979), *Fit Work for Women*, London: Croom Helm; Lawrence Stone (1979), *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

[3]The term seems to have emerged in the 1980s at heritage sites and museums. The idea of 'living history' is to attempt to recreate something from the past not just in physical terms but to allow people to 'experience' the past. This is done through costumed interpreters or re-enactors and by adding sounds and smells to exhibits.

[4]Museum examples of 'living history' are The Black Country Museum in Dudley and the Blists Hill site at the Iron Bridge Gorge Museum, Coalbrookdale. Channel 4's 1999 programme The 1900 House recreated the living conditions of a turn of the century terrace house and a family lived there for 6 months to 'experience' life in the past.

make every detail of interiors 'right', to explain how homes functioned and how people interacted with objects in their daily lives.

The desire to know more about both the tangible and intangible aspects of homes in the past has resulted in academic research seeking new methodological approaches to interrogate surviving evidence.[5] The approach used to investigate homes in the West Midlands during the period 1760-1860 is that of design history to which has been added theories of consumption. The strength of design history as an approach has been the close scrutiny of the design of objects, which brings to the fore the subtle differences between similar objects and recognises that such differences can dramatically change how an object is viewed and valued, by individuals and society. While design historians have often utilised ideas from other disciplines[6] they have in the past been strangely reluctant to study objects beyond the point of purchase; their consumption. Attfield has observed that this has led design history to 'demarcate its territory quite specifically'.[7] By contrast consumption theory is mostly concerned

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[5]Examples of work on the authentic interior include Peter Thornton (1978), *Seventeenth-Century Decoration in England, France and Holland*, New Haven and London: Yale; Peter Thornton (1984), *Authentic Decor: the Domestic Interior 1620-1920*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; Charlotte Gere (1989), *Nineteenth-Century Decoration: the Art of the Interior*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; Charles Saumarez Smith (1993), *Eighteenth-Century Decoration*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; Ian C. Bristow (1996), *Architectural Colour in British Interiors 1615-1840,* New Haven and London: Yale. Examinations of the experience of home life include Mark Girouard (1987), *Life in the English Country House,* New Haven and London: Yale; W. Rybczynski (1988), *Home: a Short History of an Idea,* London: Heinemann; Gervase Jackson-Stops (ed.) (1989), *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House,* Washington: National Gallery, Washington and University Press of New England; Stana Nenadic (1994), 'Middle-rank Consumers and Domestic Culture in Edinburgh and Glasgow 1720-1840', *Past and Present*, number 145, pp. 122-156; I. Bryden and J. Floyd (eds) (1999), *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior,* Manchester: Manchester University Press; Tim Meldrum (1999), 'Domestic service, privacy and the Eighteenth-century Metropolitan Household', *Urban History*, volume 26, number 1, pp. 27-39.

[6]For example Dick Hebdige (1988), combines the methods of design history and cultural studies in *Hiding in the Light,* London: Routledge; Jonathan Woodham (1990), combines design and art history in *Twentieth-Century Ornament*, London: Studio Vista; Neil Ewins (1997), utilzes archaeology in '"Supplying the Present Wants of Our Yankee Cousins.....": Staffordshire Ceramics and the American Market 1775-1880', *Journal of Ceramic History*, volume 15, pp. 1-154.

[7]J. Attfield (1999), 'Beyond the Pale: Reviewing the Relationship between Material Culture and Design History', *Journal of Design History,* volume 12, number 4, pp. 373-380, p. 373. This is no

with the fate of objects after purchase when they enter people's lives. It is from this point on that objects take on multiple meanings and even change their physical qualities through age and use. To achieve an idea of the meaning of home as a physical and emotional space the design of objects within the home and the nature of their consumption need to be examined.

Some account needs to be given of theories of consumption, but as the title, 'Consumption of furniture and furnishings for the home in the West Midlands using local suppliers 1760-1860', suggests, several other aspects also need to be addressed at the outset along with the historiography of each of them. They are the regional aspect of the work, the choice of furniture and furnishings to represent the material culture of the home and the choice of the period 1760-1860.

Consumption studies and theory

Until the 1980s studies of consumers and what they consume centred on the growth of capitalism. Such work, influenced strongly by Marx and his analysis of the capitalist system, tended to take a condemnatory tone. One aspect of his work revolved around the notion of the object as commodity and part of the capitalist manipulation of the market. Throughout the twentieth century writers have reinterpreted Marx's ideas to reflect current concerns. In the 1950s and 1960s

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doubt due to design historians being overly concerned with the 'pure' aspects of the design of objects, while they are still under the control of designer, maker or manufacturer. Their concern is often with the aesthetics of objects, which demonstrates the link between design history and art history. Examples of 'pure' design history include John Heskett (1988), *Industrial Design,* London: Thames and Hudson; Penny Sparke (1994), *An Introduction to Design and Culture in the Twentieth Century,* London: Routledge; Jonathan Woodham (1997), *Twentieth-Century Design,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

publications appeared such as those by Packard and Galbraith[8] that condemned the post war consumer boom and in particular criticised the role of advertising in creating 'false' needs. The oil crisis of the 1970s also produced reactions to the growth of consumerism by, for example, Schumacher and Papanek.[9] A more recent text that continues this tradition is Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle 1851-1914*[10] which deals with the growth of advertising in the second half of the nineteenth century and which sees the stimulation of the market as a forerunner of twentieth century mass consumption.

Another strand of work which condemns both consumers and commodities as immoral developed as a result of the publication in 1899 of Veblen's book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*.[11] Veblen was particularly concerned with the nouveau riche in America and coined the phrase 'conspicuous consumption' to express what he saw as their wasteful and extravagant expenditure on luxury goods. However, Veblen's ideas have had wider application to consumerism generally and continue to influence writers. For example, Perkin writes explicitly of social emulation as the reason for consumption in the later eighteenth century.[12] Rosalind Williams focuses on late nineteenth century French department stores and on the connection between

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[8]Vance Packard (1957), *The Hidden Persuaders,* London: Longman; J.K. Galbraith (1958),*The Affluent Society,* London: Hamish Hamilton.
[9]Victor Papanek (1972), *Design for the Real World*, London: Thames and Hudson; E.F.Schumacher (1974), *Small is Beautiful: a Study of Economics as if People Mattered,* London: Sphere.
[10]Thomas Richards (1990), *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle 1851-1914,* London and New York: Verso.
[11]T. Veblen (1994), *The Theory of the Leisure Class* [1899], with an introduction by R. Lekachman, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
[12]Harold Perkin (1969), *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 96.

shopping and fantasy and entertainment.[13] She argues that shoppers were seduced into making extravagant and unnecessary purchases by the atmosphere of the stores.

Although many present day consumption studies are inspired by earlier ideas which took a negative view of the process, more recently consumption theory has been used in diverse ways to interpret aspects of culture; and the theories propounded by Marx and Veblen are now seen as just part of what might be attempted. Indeed since numerous disciplines have utilised consumption theory in recent years to achieve a multitude of different objectives, Pennell has described consumption studies as 'a chameleon analytic tool'.[14] The range of disciplines that are engaging with consumption theory can be gauged from the collection of essays, *Acknowledging Consumption,*[15] in which each chapter represents a different discipline's approach to consumption; there are contributions from the stand point of history, sociology, political economy, business studies, geography, psychology, anthropology and media studies. An inter-disciplinary approach is also possible.[16] However, it is important to be aware of how consumption studies have evolved within a discipline's particular agenda.

'Consumption of furniture and furnishings for the home in the West Midlands using local suppliers 1760-1860' is an historical examination, but the nature of the enquiry

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[13]Rosalind H. Williams (1982), *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth Century Framce,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

[14]Sara Pennell (1999), 'Concumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, volume 42, number 2, pp. 549-564, p. 549.

[15]Daniel Miller (ed.) (1995), *Acknowledging Consumption,* London: Routledge.

[16]Two writers who see the need for an inter disciplinary approach are A. S. Martin (1993), 'Makers, Buyers, and Users: Consumerism as a Material Culture Framework', *Winterthur Portfolio,* volume 28, numbers 2/3, p. 157 and T. J. Schlereth (1992), *Cultural History and Material Culture: Everyday Life,*

requires other disciplines to be utilised to enable the material goods of the home to be analysed and for the cultural aspects of the home to be fully understood. Therefore the use of consumption theory by history and the other pertinent areas of material culture studies, sociology, anthropology and cultural studies will now be considered.

In the early 1980s McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb broke new ground with *The Birth of a Consumer Society*[17] by focusing on demand rather than production as the impetus for the Industrial Revolution.[18] It claimed that demand for goods in the late eighteenth century constituted the beginning of consumer culture thus placing it in the eighteenth century rather than the more usual periods of the late nineteenth or the twentieth century. Its other contribution was to link new consumption patterns with cultural change. McKendrick's contribution in particular equated increased consumption in the eighteenth century with social emulation. In part this idea derives from Simmel who described the process of emulation fuelled by fashion changes in early twentieth century urban society.[19] McKendrick gives the idea a fresh spin by making the dynamic of emulation and the fashion system, commercial techniques for stimulating the market, which he claims was a new phenomena in the eighteenth century.[20] Although this text opened up the subject of consumption in

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Landscapes, Museums, Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, p. 30. Both writers are speaking from an American Material Culture perspective.

[17]Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb (1982), *The Birth of a Consumer Society,* London: Europa.

[18]Pennell has observed that initially historical consumption studies focused on the Anglo-American 'long' eighteenth century but that they then spread to other time periods and other cultures. Pennell (1999), p. 549. Examples of the latter include, S. Schama (1987), *An Embarrassment of Riches: an Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age,* London: Collins; Craig Clunas (1991), *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in early modern China*, Oxford: Polity Press; James Davidson (1998), *Courtesans and Fishcakes: the Consuming Passions of Classical Athens,* New York: St Martin's Press.

[19]G. Simmel (1957), 'Fashion'. *American Journal of Sociology*, number 62, pp. 541-58.

[20]One of the problems with McKendrick's argument stems from the emphatic language he uses to stress the decisive nature of the changes he describes, for example: 'There was a consumer boom in

history it has been criticised for a variety of reasons: the idea of a 'birth' of a new consumer culture is difficult to substantiate; its use of examples are mainly derived from the production end of the process (such as Wedgwood); and most particularly for its insistence on the notion of emulation as the motive for consumption.[21] Campbell has pointed out that consumption that is imitative is not necessarily emulative.[22] Similarly, from a design history view point, McKendrick does not acknowledge that as objects work down the social scale their physical attributes change and therefore their cultural significance also changes.

Consumption angles to the proto-industrialisation theory have also emerged. For example, Thirsk and Mukerji[23] place the emergence of consumerism much earlier and therefore long before the generally accepted period of the Industrial Revolution, while Weatherill and Shammas[24] have used probate inventories for the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to study consumption, plotting ownership against such factors as occupation, regional location and date. Such quantitative research using hundreds and even thousands of inventories is immensely valuable;

England in the eighteenth century. In the third quarter of the century that boom reached revolutionary proportions....In fact, the later eighteenth century saw such a convulsion of getting and spending, such an eruption of new prosperity, and such an explosion of new production and marketing techniques, that a greater proportion of the population than in any previous society in human history was able to enjoy the pleasures of buying consumer goods.' McKendrick (1982), p.9.

[21]A number of writers have offered critiques of McKendrick see in particular Grant McCracken (1988), *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Goods and Activities,* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 16-22. See also John Brewer and Ann Bermingham (1995), *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text,* London: Routledge.

[22]Colin Campbell (1987), *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 19-20. See also Lorna Weatherill (1993), 'The Meaning of Consumer Behavior in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods,* London: Routledge, p. 208.

[23]Joan Thirsk (1978), *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England,* Oxford: Clarendon Press; Chandra Mukerji (1983), *From Graven Images*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Weatherill's work, for example, highlights that urban merchants were more likely to consume new commodities than their social superiors, the gentry, thus undermining the over simplistic use of emulation theory.[25]

Fresh ideas and a great variety of sources were utilised in the collection of essays edited by Brewer and Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*. In their introduction the editors surveyed recent studies on historical consumption studies noting that they had undermined production-led and judgmental arguments.[26] The scope of this book is wide in terms of the backgrounds of the writers involved, the different forms of consumption studied and the approaches taken, from the broad cultural perspective to the more precise economic analysis. Examples of the latter approach are provided by Weatherill and Shammas[27] whose work on inventories have already been referred to and by Mintz[28] writing on the consumption of sugar and new beverages. Examples of the wider cultural overview include Agnew[29] surveying 'consumer culture' and Styles[30] who analyses the nature of increased production in the eighteenth century and takes to task writers who have misused terms such as 'mass consumption' and 'mass production' since this obscures the precise nature of the eighteenth-century experience. Vickery uses an approach

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[24]Lorna Weatherill (1988), *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760,* London: Routledge; Carole Shammas (1990), *The Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[25]Weatherill (1993), p. 210.

[26]John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds) (1993), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London: Routledge, p.22.

[27]Lorna Weatherill (1993), 'The Meaning of Consumer Behaviour in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England', and Carole Shammas (1993), 'Changes in English and Anglo-American Consumption from 1550-1800', in Brewer and Porter.

[28]Sidney W. Mintz (1993), 'The Changing Role of Food in the Study of Consumption' in Brewer and Porter.

[29]Jean-Christophe Agnew (1993), 'Coming up for air: consumer culture in historical perspective' in Brewer and Porter.

commonly found in cultural studies in her detailed account of one family and more precisely one woman's relationship with her material goods, using the personal papers of a Lancashire gentlewoman.[31] The references to goods in the diaries of Elizabeth Shackleton were unusually detailed. This allowed Vickery to produce a close reading of the emotive language used in dealing with certain kinds of object and the way that Elizabeth Shackleton's relationship with her husband and other family members and friends was mirrored in her relationship with goods associated with them.

Many examples, from the Brewer and Porter collection and in historical investigations generally, deal with the consumption of non material goods, for example food and tobacco. The importance of objects for understanding everyday life in the past has often gone unrecognised. Martin has observed this to be the case, that many historians do not give sufficient importance to objects nor do they make full use of theoretical tools to understand their 'symbolism and cultural meaning.'[32] This failing has begun to be addressed in recent years and several collections of essays have appeared that bring together historians who have analysed the consumption of objects utilising a variety of analytic tools.

The collection of essays edited by Berg and Clifford, *Consumers and Luxury,* acknowledges, in the introduction, the importance of *Consumption and the World of Goods,* for establishing a framework for studying consumption in the early modern

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[30]John Styles (1993), 'Manufacturing, Consumption and Design in Eighteenth-Century England' in Brewer and Porter.
[31]Amanda Vickery (1993), "Women and the World of Goods: a Lancashire Consumer and Her Possessions, 1751-81', in Brewer and Porter.
[32]Martin (1993), p. 144.

period. The collection focuses on contemporary perceptions of luxury and how. 'Questions of novelty, imitation, value and taste arise in a pre-occupation over the period with the middling ranks.'[33] While some of the essays in this collection deal with the over-arching concepts others deal with specific commodities and their consumption at a particular time.[34] Particularly useful for this project is Nenadic's essay 'Romanticism and the urge to consume in the first half of the nineteenth century'. Nenadic takes Campbells' idea that a change in attitudes to consumption was part of a fundamental change in social behaviour which was reflected in the emergence of the Romantic movement in art, music and literature.[35]

Bryden and Floyd have edited a collection entitled *Domestic Space*[36] which deals with aspects of material culture in the nineteenth-century home in Britain and America. The strength of this collection is that all the essays are focused on the same subject allowing various aspects to be examined and in a variety of ways, using techniques which range from social and design history to literature and architectural history. In this way many of the preconceptions of nineteenth century domesticity and the domestic environment are challenged and reassessed. For example, Steedman's essay, on the use of rag rugs challenges her own misconceptions of their manufacture and use as well as the generally nostalgic attitude that can attach to such

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[33]Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (eds) (1999), *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 2.

[34]For example Marcia Pointon (1999), 'Jewellery in Eighteenth-Century England', in Berg and Clifford, and Helen Clifford (1999), 'A Commerce with Things: the Value of Precious Metalwork in Early Modern England', in Berg and Clifford.

[35]Nenadic, Stana (1999), 'Romanticism and the Urge to Consume in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', in M. Berg and H. Clifford (eds), *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850,* Manhester: Manchester University Press. Nenadic refers to Campbell (1987).

[36]I. Bryden and J. Floyd (1999), *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior,* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

objects.[37] A number of the essays explore what the editors refer to in their introduction as 'the interior's liminal status'.[38] Walker and Ware, for example, deal with the disjuncture between women's involvement in the abolitionist movement and their homemaking activities; many politically charged objects found their way into the early nineteenth century home and in some cases, such as embroidered pictures and pincushions, the tension was embodied in individual objects.[39] Similarly, Donald examines the illusion of the home as sanctuary from the unpleasantness of the outside world and more particularly from the world of work. Donald shows that the home was a site of much hard work on the part of the mistress of the house but also for a large section of the population in paid employment as servants.[40]

Material Culture Studies embraces many disciplines the aim being to produce a socio-cultural history of a time or place through studying the world of goods that it used or produced. The academics that have concerned themselves with studying material culture have been from such disciplines as history, anthropology and archaeology as well as museum professionals. Unlike design history, material culture has embraced notions of consumption totally since it works from the opposite end of an object's life by observing how it has acquired meaning through consumption and use. However, work emanating from material culture studies has oversights with regard to consumption theory: material culture studies have a long background in north America and much of the work has been limited to early

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[37]C. Steedman (1999), 'What a Rag Rug Means', in Bryden and Floyd.
[38]Bryden and Floyd (1999), p. 1.
[39]L. Walker and V. Ware (1999), 'Political Pincushions: Decorating the Abolitionist Interior 1787-1865', in Bryden and Floyd.
[40]M. Donald (1999), 'Tranquil havens? Critiquing the Idea of Home as the Middle-Class Sanctuary' in Bryden and Floyd.

American colonial life which emphasises pre-industrial production of goods.[41] Martin links the interest in consumption in the American colonies as being part of the 1960s and 1970s 'larger social critique of modern society that implied the benefit of a return to nature or at least to the "roots" of the American ideal.'[42] She calls for a widening of the definition of consumption to include consumerism which she interprets as applying to 'modern or industrial society'.[43] Martin states that:

> The study of consumerism has prompted scholars to question old notions of status as measured in purely economic terms or of the primacy of 'folk' culture as inherently more interesting or noble than market-based culture.[44]

While Martin felt that material culture studies had in the past tended to produce stereotypical images of the 'American frontiersman and noble craftsman'[45] she concedes that this has been rejected and a more blurred image has emerged due to explanations of proto-industrialisation being adopted. But still the concern is with what was distinctive about American culture in the colonial period and how that has informed present day culture. Attfield maintains that American material culture studies have a fundamental concern with producing a '"more open, more equal, more democratic, more popular American History"'. The danger of this she warns is that it can lead to a 'unified narrative'.[46]

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[41]For example, J. Deetz (1977), *In Small Things Forgotten: the Archeology of Early American Life,* New York: Anchor Books; H. Glassie (1975), *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia: A Structural Analysis of Historical Artifacts,* Knoxville: University of Tennessee; S. J. Bronner (ed.) (1985), *American Material Culture and Folklife: a prologue and dialogue,* Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

[42]Martin (1993), p. 147.

[43]Martin (1993), p. 142.

[44]Martin (1993), p. 156.

[45]Martin (1993), p. 148.

[46]Attfield (1999), p. 376. Quoting Cary Carson of Colonial Williamsburg.

Given the differences in British and north American cultural history and the bias of American material culture studies much of the published texts can only provide a general framework for considering consumption in the period 1760-1860 in Britain. One exception is Grier's *Culture and Comfort*, an analysis of the furnishing of parlours.[47] Although dealing with American examples and largely drawn from the second half of the nineteenth century, this text provides useful overlaps with the conditions of consumption considered here. Grier focuses on middling and provincial material culture, which she contextualises with contemporary publications (many of which were originally published in Britain). Grier also uses unpublished diaries, letters, photographs and, since she is a museum curator, a great many surviving objects. This attempt at uncovering the personal circumstances of consumption makes *Culture and Comfort* an inspiring analysis of the social and cultural meanings of homes in the past.

Anthropology and Sociology[48] have contributed to consumption theory by introducing social and cultural readings of people's relationship to the world of goods. Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, for example, articulate the need to move away from the more obvious explanations of consumption: 'Instead of supposing that goods are primarily needed for subsistence plus competitive display, let us assume that they are needed for making visible and stable the categories of

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[47]Katherine C. Grier (1988), *Culture and Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery 1850-1930,* Rochester, New York: The Strong Museum and University of Massachusetts Press.

[48]Although these are two disciplines the distinctions are often blurred: anthropology studies cultures while sociology studies societies. For example the work of Miller, an anthropologist who deals with contemporary societies, see D. Miller (ed.) (1993), *Unwrapping Christmas,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

culture.'[49] Thus, a more fundamental role is assigned to consumption practises in the shaping of culture. Similarly, Bourdieu has written of the relationship between consumption and the preservation of class boundaries; the expression of cultural capital being as important as financial capital.[50] The anthropologist, Kopytoff, has made the useful contribution of suggesting the unstable or unfixed meanings of objects.[51]

While these disciplines have made some challenging contributions to debates around consumption theory much of the work has centred on the present day, as in the work of Lunt and Livingstone.[52] When an attempt at a historical survey is included by sociologists the result is often too condensed to be useful.[53] In some cases this is due to studies which offer historically specific analysis, without the historical context being given sufficient consideration.[54] In other cases a certain lack of historical awareness is present, for example, in the work of Campbell who propounds somewhat abstract theories which do not quite fit the relevant historical situation. However, his problematising of over simplistic emulation theory has helped to advance research into motives for consumption in the past.[55]

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[49]M. Douglas and B. Isherwood (1996), *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption,* London and New York: Routledge, p. 38.

[50]P. Bourdieu (1984), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* translated by R. Nice, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

[51]Igor Kopytoff (1992), 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[52]P.K. Lunt and S. Livingstone (1992), *Mass Consumption and Personal Identity,* Buckingham: Open University Press.

[53]See for example chapter 1, 'The emergence of modern consumerism' in Robert Bocock (1993), *Consumption: Key Ideas,* London: Routledge, pp. 10-33.

[54]Bourdieu's work is an example of this tendency.

[55]Campbell (1987). This is also true of McCracken, see for example chapter 6, 'Consumer Goods, Gender Construction, and a Rehabilitated Trickle-down Theory' in McCracken (1988), pp. 93-103.

Useful cross-fertilisation can occur when history utilises the work of these disciplines in order that the meaning of goods in people's lives can be appreciated. As Martin has observed, historians need to ask, 'how artefacts function in ritualized behavior, differentiation of social rank, formation of social group, and how meaning is conferred and changed.'[56]

The discipline of cultural studies is closely related to sociology. It has produced detailed research on how consumption plays a part in defining sections of society. For example, Hebdige and Willis[57] have both produced work on subcultures and Nava[58] on how teenagers circumvent mass produced cultural artefacts to express a sense of identity. Generally, cultural studies has been more concerned with cultural practices than with material goods and like sociology, it has been predominantly concerned with contemporary culture. The use of ethnography by cultural studies practitioners to study the experience of individuals within contemporary culture has influenced a number of design historians such as Attfield and Partington in looking at the 1950s.[59] These two historians have successfully blended a close reading of design matters with social/women's history and a cultural studies perspective which has resulted in fresh interpretations of certain aspects of consumption patterns in the 1950s. The challenge is to carry these ideas into a more distant time period where the people are long dead and can not be interviewed and observed.

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[56]Martin (1993), p. 156.

[57]P. Willis (1990), *Common Culture,* Milton Keynes: Open University Press; D. Hebdige (1979), *Subculture: The Meaning of Style,* London: Methuen.

[58]M. Nava (1992), *Changing Cultures,* London: Sage.

[59]J. Attfield (1995), 'Inside Pram Town: A Case Study of Harlow House Interiors, 1951-61' and A. Partington (1995), 'The Designer Housewife in the 1950s', both in J. Attfield and P. Kirkham, *A View from the Interior: Women and Design,* London: The Womens' Press

Regional/local history

How has regional variation been dealt with by consumption theory? Most consumption theory has been broad based and little has so far been published that explores consumption patterns and meaning for specific regions of Britain. One exception is the work of Stena Nenadic who has researched various aspects of social and cultural history in Scotland, particularly Glasgow and Edinburgh, in the eighteenth century. Several short essays address consumption explicitly.[60] While Nenadic's work is useful, an article or chapter in a multi-author work is of necessity limited and Edinburgh and Glasgow, which provide her case studies, are in many ways atypical of other parts of Britain.

Another author to address regional variations in consumption patterns is Weatherill[61] who has taken a stronger empirical approach than Nenadic. Weatherill has utilised a large number of probate inventories for eight regions in Britain which has allowed her to examine issues of supply, regional attitudes to goods and the differences between urban and rural life.[62] Weatherill's work has been important for establishing the widespread consumption of certain goods and highlighting regional variations but her period is the preceding hundred years to the period examined here. Moreover, the extensive use of inventories and quantitative analysis has resulted in a somewhat

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[60]S. Nenadic (1994), 'Middle-rank Consumers and Domestic Culture in Edinburgh and Glasgow 1720-1840', *Past and Present*, number 145, pp. 122-156 and Nenadic (1999).

[61]Weatherill (1988) and (1993).

[62]Estabrook has also found differences in urban and rural consumption patterns. His work deals with Bristol and rural Somerset from the mid 17th to the mid 18th centuries. Carl B. Estabrook (1998), *Urbane and Rustic England: Cultural Ties and Social Spheres in the Provinces 1660-1780,* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

generalised picture. None the less, Weatherill's work has provided a sound basis on which more detailed work, and more culturally specific work, can build.

Regional variations in consumption might also be a topic for local/regional historians. A great deal of research has been done on the West Midlands, providing a wealth of material on many aspects of life in the region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This research takes a number of forms, such as the broad survey approach of the history of part of the West Midlands[63] or studies of individual towns.[64] Then there are the edited collections of inventories with introductions.[65] Each of these types of regional research has a different agenda but consumption tends to be overlooked or dealt with tentatively. Thus, they provide much information and, as with Weatherill's work, a basis for research that takes a more detailed look at the process of consumption. A few examples will illustrate the benefit of using research on regional history but also its limitations and thus the need for more work on regional consumption.

Trinder's study of Shropshire during the Industrial Revolution includes a useful chapter on housing and the growth of communities during industrialisation. Trinder

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[63]For example B. Trinder (1981), *The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire*, Chichester: Phillimore; G.J. Barnsby (1980), *Social Conditions in the Black Country 1800-1900,* Wolverhampton: Integrated Publishing Services.

[64]Examples of these include David Cannadine (1980), *Lords and Landlords: the Aristocracy and the Towns 1774-1967,* Leicester: Leicester University Press. Cannadine investigates Birmingham, comparing it to Eastbourne; E. Hopkins (1989), *Birmingham: the first manufacturing town in the world 1760-1840*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; M. Wanklyn (1993), 'Urban Revival in Early Modern England: Bridgnorth and the River Trade, 1660-1800', *Midland History*, volume 18, pp. 37-64.

[65]For example B. Trinder and J. Cox (eds) (1980), *Yeomen and Colliers in Telford,* Chichester: Phillimore; M. Wanklyn (ed.) (1998), *Inventories of Worcestershire Landed Gentry 1537-1786,* Worcestershire Historical Society New Series, volume 16, Worcester: The Worcestershire Historical Society; B. Trinder and N. Cox (eds) (2000), *Miners and Mariners of the Severn Gorge,* Chichester: Phillimore.

provides detailed material on workers' housing in the Coalbrookdale area.[66] Barnsby is also predominantly concerned with the working class. His survey of conditions at work, in housing and education only touches on consumption in the broadest sense. Within a section on 'The Standard of Living' he outlines what average wages could purchase.[67] This has tended to be the stance taken in social and economic history. Trinder and Cox's edited collection of inventories, *Miners and Mariners of the Severn Gorge* goes some way to address this lack of detail. For example, 'Since bed linen was highly esteemed, it is not surprising that sheets were listed carefully, and it is possible to deduce from inventories how many sheets were available for each bed in a house.'[68] The detailed analysis they provide for the period 1660-1764 is useful, since they deal with an area with similar characteristics (industrialising but not fully urbanised) to some parts of the West Midlands, for example, the Potteries that are dealt with here. However, the emphasis is on establishing patterns of ownership, from which some conclusions can be reached but without further theorising the cultural implications of such ownership. As Trinder and Cox also note, inventories for the later period do not survive in sufficient quantities to continue their research into the later eighteenth century and beyond.[69] What is required is work on consumption issues in the early modern period that utilise a wider range of sources and which adopt more searching methodologies for their use; sources and methodologies that are available and appropriate to extend the enquiry into the modern period.

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[66]The better kind of the housing Trinder describes was occupied by skilled workers but also by lesser tradespeople. Trinder (1981), p. 194.

[67]Barnsby (1980), pp. 227-9.

[68]Trinder and Cox (2000), p. 65.

[69]Trinder and Cox (2000), p. 80. Weatherill also stops at 1760. Weatherill (1988).

Furniture history

Furniture history needs to be examined since it is the consumption of furniture and furnishings with which this research is predominantly concerned. Other types of object might have been chosen for consideration such as ceramics or cooking utensils. However, it is the area of furniture and furnishings that arguably played the most important role in the changing nature of the home at this time. Considerations such as the adoption of new kinds of furniture, the increased use of textiles, the greater application of fashionable ideas and the use of furnishings to differentiate between rooms in the house all point to the domestic environment being used in new ways.

The period 1760-1860 was one of change in manufacturing methods in many trades producing goods for the home,[70] but the craft of furniture production - making wooden items and fashioning furnishings such as curtains - was affected less dramatically by new production methods. Perhaps the most important aspect of the continuation of traditional patterns of manufacture within the furniture trade was the local nature of supply. Unlike ceramics, for example, where the development of the Staffordshire potteries supplied the whole country, furniture by contrast, continued to be made often by small firms for a local market and this encouraged an element of individual or bespoke orders.[71] A number of points can be pursued through examining the furniture trade rather than trades which adopted large scale factory

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[70]Notably ceramics and cotton textiles, see Adrian Forty (1987), *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750-1980,* London: Thames and Hudson.

[71]For the lack of change in the trade see Pat Kirkham (1988), 'The London Furniture Trade 1700-1870', *Furniture History,* volume 24, pp. 1-219 and Clive Edwards (1996), *Eighteenth-Century Furniture,* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

production for national distribution. The furniture maker was supplying a known region and distinct market and therefore particular patterns of consumption might be discernible. The relative fashionability of regional makers can be established by comparing their production with the trade in London. Through such a comparison an idea of the proliferation of fashionable ideas can be gained and conversely the special nature of regional differences will be apparent.

The other important consideration in favour of selecting furniture for examination was its ability to be made over into new items; furniture was repaired, adapted into new objects or some parts replaced. Part of the furniture maker's job was to repair furniture and to perform other maintenance work such as putting down carpets, changing curtains, papering walls and even painting and decorating. Apart from revealing the minutiae of people's domestic arrangements, this servicing aspect also reveals the compromises of 'making do' to which homemakers resorted. The personal service aspect of cabinet makers' work needs to be taken into consideration when the value of goods at this period is being evaluated; the anonymous batch-produced object might have been enhanced in use by being the subject of individual treatment by a tradesperson before further individualisation by the customer through use. Therefore, an investigation into the furniture trade and the consumption of furniture enables the changing cultural meaning of the home to be explored.

Furniture history is a well established area of scholarship. While it has contributed much to our understanding of the evolution of furniture types, of the different stylistic periods and of certain individual makers/designers, it has been slow to embrace wider concerns of furniture production and consumption. In common with

art history, furniture history has traditionally given most emphasis to élite production and high-profile designers.[72] This emphasis can in part be explained by the close connection between furniture history and the antiques trade, which has encouraged the specialised knowledge concerned with particular makers and designers, questions of attribution and provenance. However, even within a predominantly élite sphere, there have been publications which go beyond connoisseurship. The pioneering work of Thornton and Girouard[73] has placed furniture within the context of historic interiors. These books have had a great impact on historic house and museum professionals.[74] Thornton and Girouard have been followed by Saumarez Smith and Gere[75] who utilise contemporary images of interiors to aid our understanding of how furniture functioned in-situ, Saumarez Smith in particular brings much extraneous material together to explain manufacture, such as the use of pattern books. Although closely focused on particular designers or types of interior, for example books on Pugin and antiquarian interiors,[76] Wainwright's work is in keeping with the newer approach outlined, since he places furniture styles within a historical framework that goes a long way to explain its function and use.

A break with studying élite manufacture occurred in the 1980s and 1990s with the growth of interest in regional or vernacular furniture. This furniture was made in native woods of simple construction, with only slight if any reference to fashionable

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[72]For example C. Wilk (1981), *Marcel Breuer: Furniture and Interiors,* New York: Museum of Modern Art; H. Haywood and P. Kirkham (1980), *William and John Linnell,* London: Studio Vista/Christie's.

[73]Thornton (1978) and Girouard (1978).

[74]Some times the influence was also by example - Peter Thornton was a curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum and worked on the interiors of Ham House, he then became curator at Sir John Soane's Museum, London.

styles and usually by anonymous craftsmen who were not trained as cabinet makers. Such furniture was found in most homes in both towns and countryside and in the service areas of wealthy people's houses, and used in institutions such as schools, workhouses and prisons.[77] The work of regional furniture historians is an extension of traditional furniture history but it also requires a different methodology; a social history of furniture making. However, the emphasis still tends to be on the makers not the users of furniture.[78] Regional furniture studies have influenced this research, particularly the use of documentary sources to supplement knowledge of furniture where few examples of everyday goods survive, however, such work still does not wholly address consumption issues.

Everyday furniture, that is furniture which fell between the categories of élite and vernacular goods has only slowly become the subject of research. This furniture was locally made but somewhat in keeping with current fashions and it was consumed by the middling sort. Such prosaic items were made in far larger quantities than the élite goods for the wealthy but it was less well documented since few makers used labels inside their furniture and the provenance of everyday goods was rarely recorded. Everyday furniture has therefore been viewed as less attractive by furniture historians conducting research since it is of less interest to the antiques trade or to museums. Everyday furniture has also been less easy to research by the usual documentary

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[75]Charles Saumaraz Smith (1993), *Eighteenth-Century Decoration,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; C. Gere (1989), *Nineteenth-Century Decoration: the Art of the Interior,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

[76]C. Wainwright (1989), *The Romantic Interior,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

[77]C. Gilbert (1991), *English Vernacular Furniture 1750-1900,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press; B.D. Cotton (1990), *The English Regional Chair,* Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club.

[78]When I submitted an article to *Regional Furniture* which they published in 1994 I was asked to remove biographical information on the customers of a furniture maker.

methods. However, a few furniture historians are bringing design history. social history and material culture ideas to bear on furniture studies which has opened up the subject considerably. Kirkham's extensive research into the nature of the London trade is exemplary.[79] Sargentson's study of furniture dealers and upholsterers in Paris[80] recognises the complexities of the trade and how goods were remodelled and remade to make them fashionable or how eastern imports were made more acceptable to a western market. Victorian furniture making is examined by Edwards, through the unusual source of patents[81] and Cross deals with the neglected area of the importation of timber and the influence this had on furniture making.[82]

American furniture historians have been the most successful in employing a well rounded material culture approach. Research to profit from this approach has been carried out by Trent and Ward, for example and articles in the *Wintherthur Portfolio* and the yearly publication, *American Furniture*.[83] In the latter's 1995 edition, Beckerdite, in his introduction, called for 'a "new Connoisseurship" - one that acknowledges that all artifacts are potentially significant historical documents, even

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[79]See for example Kirkham (1988) and P. Kirkham (1995),'"If You Have No Sons": Furniture-making in Britain' in Attfield and Kirkham (1995).

[80]C. Sargentson (1996), *Merchants and Luxury Markets: The Marchands Merciers of Eighteenth-Century Paris,* London: Victoria and Albert Museum in association with J. Paul Getty Museum.

[81]C. Edwards (1993), *Victorian Furniture: Technology and Design,* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

[82]John M. Cross (1994), 'The Changing Role of the Timber Merchant in Early Eighteenth-Century London', *Furniture History,* volume 30, pp. 57-64.

[83]Jonathan L. Fairbanks and Robert F. Trent (1982), *New England Begins: The Seventeenth Century*, 3 volumes, Boston: Boston Museum of Fine Arts; Gerald R. Ward (1988), *Perspectives on American Furniture,* New York and London: W.W. Norton for the Winterthur Museum; Margaretta M. Lovell (1991), '"Such Furniture as Will Be Most Profitable": The Business of Cabinet-making in Eighteenth-Century Newport', *Winterthur Portfolio*, volume 26, number 1, pp. 27-62; Laura Thatcher Ulrich (1995), 'Furniture as Social History: Gender, Property, and Memory in the Decorative Arts', in Luke Beckerdite (ed.), *American Furniture 1995,* Hanover, N.H. and London: Chipstone Foundation and distributed by University Press of New England.

those that fail to meet the shifting, subjective, aesthetic requirements of "art".'[84] But much of this scholarship retains a particular agenda, as is clear from Conforti's introduction to *Perspectives on American Furniture:*

> Slowly the progeny of an immigrant past have come to represent American region, class, or hyphenated subculture more than the society of their forebears: a homogenous people maybe never, but a distinct nation nonetheless.[85]

Most North American furniture history is thus primarily concerned with what makes American furniture distinctive.

Perhaps the least successful essays in American furniture history are the imaginative interpretations of furniture as part of the world of goods utilising semiology and psycho-analytic tools. For example, Prown and Miller writing about the 'cultural expressions' of eighteenth century Philadelphia chests of drawers include references that range across such disparate cultural artefacts as Fragonard paintings from the mid eighteenth century to Salvador Dali bronze statues of c. 1935, a Georgia O'Keefe painting from 1930 and a carved female figure from Tanzania c. 1900.[86]

Periodisation

Setting categorical parameters to a historical study does, to some extent, create a false sense of order about the past. However, such parameters are important in

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[84]Luke Beckerdite (ed.) (1995), p. xii.

[85]Michael Conforti (1989), 'Introduction: The Transfer and Adaptation of European Culture in North America', in Francis J. Puig and Michael Conforti (eds), *The American Craftsman and the European Tradition 1620-1820,* Hanover and London: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, p. xiii.

focusing attention on what was distinct and special about a period and an acknowledgement that, if the subject of enquiry were studied over a different time frame, a rather different picture would result.[87] Most historical studies are arranged around time spans which reflect particular concerns and predilections. The period chosen to examine consumption for the home is that of 1760 to 1860 and to some extent this time frame goes against other historical studies. The early modern period is generally treated as distinct to the modern, post-1800 period.[88] The Industrial Revolution being seen as heralding social, cultural, economic and political change.

Theories about proto-industrialistion have resulted in a slightly different stance being taken. The early modern period has been examined for signs of transition that predate the changes from the later eighteenth century onwards.[89] This is the view of Earle examining the development of the middle class in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[90] Thirsk, Mukerji and Weatherill have all dealt with changing consumption patterns in the early modern period that pre-date the industrial changes that were long thought to have brought about increased consumption.[91]

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[86]Jonathan Prown and Richard Miller (1996), 'The Rococo, the Grotto, and the Philadelphia High Chest' in Luke Beckerdite (ed.) *American Furniture 1996*, Hanover, N.H. and London: Chipstone Foundation and distributed by University Press of New England, pp. 105-136.

[87]Some historical studies choose the tidy, century long time span, furniture history, determined by stylistic changes has often done this, linked to art history teaching and the interests of collectors. Some authors adopt a long time span and do not always deal with ideas chronologically. These tend not to be written by historians, but rather sociologists with an interest in cultural history, while some are inspired insights into human behaviour and development, for example Elias' ideas on 'civilising' characteristics, others are less successful; their ahistorical nature always interfering. Examples of these wide ranging histories are N. Elias (1978), *The Civilising Process,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell; Campbell (1987); McCracken (1988); Rybczynski (1988); C. J. Berry (1994), *The Idea of Luxury: a conceptual and historical investigation,* London: Cambridge University Press.

[88]1760 is often the cut-off point for early modernists who are using inventories, due to probate inventories ceasing to be made in large numbers after that date.

[89]For the complexities of the industrialising process see Pat Hudson (ed.) (1989), *Regions and Industries: a Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[90]P. Earle (1989), *The Making of the English Middle Class,* London: Methuen.

[91]Thirsk (1978); Mukerji (1983); Weatherill (1988).

The early modern period has also been examined in recent years for signs of the modern world beginning. This is explicit in the title of McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb's, *The Birth of a Consumer Society.* The idea of the 'birth' of a phenomenon is an attractive stand point, but it is difficult to prove. The importance of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century for understanding the twentieth century is expressed by Brewer and Porter in their introduction to the collection of essays *Consumption and the World of Goods.* After listing some of the existing work on consumption in the early modern period the authors jump to the 'lively scholarship' that deals with the 'distinctive forms of consumer-capitalism emerging in the second half of the nineteenth century and flourishing in the twentieth'.[92] Brewer and Porter do not acknowledge the jump in chronology and the lack of work on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Instead they justify the importance of looking at the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because it will increase 'our understanding of the development of western society' by confronting the 'politics, uniquely in world history, [that] have come to revolve around the mass of consumption of goods and services. We need to understand how this system originated and how it has functioned.'[93] The key word is 'originated'; it implies that the origins of mass consumption can be found in the eighteenth century.

The period of industrialisation, is generally viewed as a period of change. Apart from work that deals with the inventions and innovative production methods in industry this period has also been looked at for the social and cultural changes

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[92]Brewer and Porter (1993), p. 1.
[93]Brewer and Porter (1993), p. 3.

brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation. The aspect most written about has been the changes to the class structure and perhaps the prime example of this is Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class.*[94] This has been followed by research into the corresponding formation of a British middle class, for example Wahrman, Kidd and Nicholls.[95] Davidoff and Hall are also concerned with class formation during the period 1780-1850,[96] prioritising the previously neglected dimension of gender. While concentrating on the later part of the period, 1820-1850, they argue that gender relations formed a crucial element in the dynamics of the English middle class.

To some extent research on the nineteenth century builds on the earlier industrialising period by assuming that changes had taken place and a new social, cultural and political situation existed and could be examined, with a Marxist agenda sometimes apparent. For this reason, the Victorian period, or that of 1850-1914, rather than the whole nineteenth century is often favoured. For example Briggs has defined what he sees as particularly Victorian characteristics[97] and Crossick has examined the rise of a lower middle class in the later nineteenth century.[98] Feminist historians have analysed how the position of women was affected by the removal of work from the domestic environment and the growth of the middle class.[99] The later

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[94]Thompson (1963).

[95]Dror Wahrman (1995), *Imagining the Middle Class*, London: Cambridge University Press; Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (eds) (1998), *The Making of the British Middle Class?,* Stroud: Sutton.

[96]Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall (1987), *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, London: Routledge.

[97]A. Briggs (1990), *Victorian Things,* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

[98]G. Crossick (1977), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914,* London, Croom Helm.

[99]M. Visinus (ed.) (1972), *Suffer and be Still: Women in the Victorian Age,* London: Methuen; S. Delamont and L. Duffin (eds) (1978), *The Nineteenth-Century Woman - Her Cultural and Physical* World, London: Croom Helm. A distinct middle class culture of consumption is also found in texts analysing the development of the midlle class in this period. See for example Davidoff and Hall (1987).

nineteenth century has also been seen as the precursor of the twentieth century: the increase in shops, particularly the development of department stores. branding and advertising of goods, are seen as distinctly 'modern' developments.[100]

The period 1760-1860 is being used to examine consumption for the home since the material culture of the domestic environment under went changes during the period which can not be explained by only considering the early modern or Victorian periods.

From inventory evidence and from pictorial depictions of interiors it is clear that the physical attributes of middling sort homes altered between 1760 and 1860. (Figures 1 to 4) At the outset of the period interiors were not drastically different from those of one hundred years earlier.[101] Although the ownership of certain objects increased, which indicate changing habits in eating and drinking, for example, they do not suggest a social and cultural rethinking of the use of the home. By contrast, at the close of the period 1760-1860 changes had occurred which altered the domestic environment. Firstly homes had acquired numerous objects, many of them incorporating textiles which had transformed the look of rooms and which altered the general comfort and warmth of interiors.[102] Secondly there had been widespread adoption of a number of living rooms with distinct uses and with correspondingly

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[100]See for example Williams (1982); Richards (1990); J. Benson (1994), *The Rise of a Consumer Society in Britain 1880-1980,* London: Longman.

[101]This point is made by John Styles (1993), p. 539.

[102]Bristow's work on paint schemes in eighteenth and nineteenth century interiors makes the point that, in wealthy homes in the 1760s, complex paint schemes were chosen to enhance the architectural features of rooms and that they were chosen by architects. By the early nineteenth century with 'elaborate draperies the balance shifted, and these furnishings often came to dominate the work of the architect'. Ian C. Bristow (1996), *Architectural Colour in British Interiors 1615-1840*, New Haven and London: Yale, p. xii.

different decorative schemes. In particular the dining room and drawing room were distinguished, by the furnishings, as 'male' and 'female'. The dining room was meant to be dignified and substantial with large items of furniture in dark woods, heavy curtains and decorative elements of a serious nature such as family portraits. By contrast the drawing room was characterised by light pretty furnishings, delicate furniture, gilded ornaments and damask or chintz curtains.

While some differentiation between rooms was evident in the later eighteenth century these tendencies became more pronounced by the early nineteenth century.[103] The differentiation of rooms in the eighteenth century was also confined to the upper sections of society with grand houses. An important aspect of the nineteenth century changes was the spread of these tendencies to the middle sections of society. Along with the different furnishing schemes was the differentiation of use; rooms were meant to reflect who used them, for what purpose and the image that they should project to visitors to the house. The increased number of objects, the more pronounced use of textiles and the differentiation of rooms were all radical changes to the domestic environment, particularly for the homes of the middling sort.

The physical changes in the domestic environment need to be seen within a wide historical framework in order that the reasons for the changes can be assessed. The overlap with the classic industrialisation period must be examined. The usual explanation of how the design of individual goods changed due to mechanised

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[103]For an account of the gendering of rooms see Juliet Kinchin (1996), 'Interiors: nineteenth-century essays on the "masculine" and the "feminine" room' in P. Kirkham (ed.), *The Gendered Object,* Manchester: Manchester University Press. Kinchin quotes texts from 1803 and 1864 which describe rooms in almost identical ways showing the consistency of these ideas during the first half of the

production is unsatisfactory.[104] This idea suggests that new processes and methods of production led to radical changes in the design and general physical attributes of goods. Decoration, for example, was no longer a sign of craftsmanship and goods that had once been deemed luxuries became available to middling rank people. Design historians have challenged the technological explanations for design change instead seeking social and cultural influences.[105] When considering the furniture and furnishings found in the domestic environment alternative explanations are certainly needed since the furniture trade did not change greatly during the period and it was slow to mechanise. The furniture trade in general did not adopt steam powered machinery until the later nineteenth century[106] and despite the mechanisation of textile production, the fashioning of upholstery in the form of seating and curtains was still produced by upholsterers using traditional methods. Finally, many of the textile furnishings found in homes were produced within the household. Clearly the reasons for the changes in the physical attributes of the domestic interior cannot be explained by simplistic production led arguments. The link between the physical and the changing social and cultural uses of the home indicate that complex changes took place which need to be explored.

The fast growing body of work on consumers and consumption has greatly aided our understanding of these topics and how consumption patterns have developed since

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nineteenth century. Although rooms became more crowded in this period they did not reach the density of furnishings achieved in the 1870s. Kinchin (1996), pp. 13-4.

[104]This idea probably began with the attitudes promulgated by Arts and Crafts practitioners, particularly the extensive writings of William Morris. It was further developed by Pevsner (1988) [1936] and has had general currency ever since. William Morris became an important influence on taste in the later 19th century but his work lies outside the remit of this research.

[105]For example Adrian Forty (1987), *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750-1980,* London: Thames and Hudson.

[106]A few firms adopted steam powered machinery but only for a few limited processes and then only in London and other centres of production. Kirkham (1988), p. 32

the early modern period. However, a number of broad criticisms can be made of much of the work to date which need to be addressed. Firstly, there has been a lack of work on consumption in the nineteenth century with the eighteenth and the twentieth attracting most attention. When the nineteenth century is dealt with it is generally the later years which are seen as a forerunner of modern mass consumption. The balance will be addressed here by considering the nineteenth century particularly the early years.

A second issue arising from the historiography is that much of the work on consumption patterns for the early modern period has focused on probate inventories which do not continue into the modern period. New types of data are used here which span the periods to allow a seamless analysis of consumption patterns.

While the empirically led work can act as a basis for understanding consumption patterns much of it does not attempt any further analysis of social and cultural implications. On the other hand sociological and anthropological analysis is often too theory based and does not relate closely enough to actual examples. This research project seeks to move between these disparate although not necessarily opposing methodologies.

Aims of the project

There are two broad aims of the project. Firstly to examine patterns of consumption of furniture and home furnishings during the period 1760-1860. Secondly, to examine the changing cultural meaning of the home during the period. These aims

will be achieved by dividing the work into three sections; the first deals with the components to be analysed, the furniture trade and the consumers. Furniture and furnishings are used as the main subjects of consumption and the furniture trade is examined to determine the conditions under which objects were made and sold and the nature of any changes during the period. The individuals who provide the examples of consumption for the home will be examined to observe the processes of purchasing goods, their ownership and use. The methodology adopted here requires biographical information concerning these individuals which will help to contextualise their consumption habits.

The second and third sections deal with the elements which have been identified as influencing consumption during the period: the location of consumers, their social class or status, the circumstances of their lived experience, and the influence of gender in homemaking. (Partly due to the inter disciplinary nature of these sections additional historiography will be included where relevant.) The location of consumers is examined to identify whether there was a connection between where people lived, their access to and knowledge of fashionable goods and their propensity to consume them. The consumers are next studied according to their social and cultural identity. Rather than adopt a narrowly defined middle class category, more culturally specific groups are adopted here according to source of income; inherited wealth and investments, land owning, trade and manufacturing occupations. Thus this section examines two factors which might differentiate between people's propensity to consume.

The third section uses the notion, borrowed from cultural studies, of 'lived experience' as a means of avoiding the stereotypical image of the home derived from prescriptive literature, and which has been replicated in many secondary sources. Evidence of homes is examined taking into account such factors as the consumer's age, marital status and whether they were prospering or experiencing financial difficulties. These different circumstances for consumption are compared to the ideal image presented in prescriptive literature. Finally the nature of the home is examined, its symbolic meanings and how these changed during the period. By rejecting simplistic explanations based on the dualities of public/private and male/female the home is examined to see how these elements were combined and how their expression grew in complexity. Section three suggests that the two factors of lived experience and gender affected all homemakers during the period.

As stated at the outset the methodology adopted is that of design history utilising other disciplines in order that a sense of the physical reality of homes and their cultural meaning can be achieved. A combination of design history, material culture and cultural studies has been suggested by Attfield as the way forward to understand the consumption of material goods and their role in people's lives.

> A material culture approach.....that depends on a more ethnographic approach, soon shows how particular cases on the ground constantly confound any attempts to be locked into a theoretical system by bringing us back to the physical object.[107]

Attfield is primarily concerned with twentieth century research. In this project few of the homes dealt with still exist with their contents and none of the consumers can be

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[107]Attfield (1999), p. 377.

interviewed.[108] Pointon has recogised this problem but at the same time she suggests the possibility of 'reading' evidence for hidden or implied meanings. Speaking of wills she says:

> I do not wish to suggest that we can 'hear' the voices of women in the past speaking through these legal documents; on the other hand, the often idiosynctratic nature of the language used, the sometimes extraordinary degree of detail with which objects are delineated, and the cumulative effect of the representation, *en masse,* of valued artefacts cannot be ignored.[109]

In a similar way the people featured in this research are dealt with as individuals and the evidence of their homes, such as inventories, account books and advertisements are interrogated, sometimes more than once, in different ways, so that they reveal the fullest meaning. In this way the nature of homes and their cultural meaning will be achieved.

Contribution to knowledge.

The first is to present a coherent picture of the changes taking place in the home, in the period of classic industrialisation, and to challenge the perception of 1800 as a moment of division.

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[108]The use of letters and diaries would suggest a possible method of interogating people in the past, but the detailed comments that Vickery found in Elizabeth Shackleton's diaries are unusual. Vickery (1993) and (1998), *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England,* New Haven and London: Yale Univesity Press.

[109]Marcia Pointon (1997), *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800,* London: Oxford University Press, p. 3.

Secondly, provincial taste and demand, often ignored by other writers who have concentrated on London suppliers and on high fashion commodities, is prioritised here. My approach challenges the assumption that provincial taste merely followed the London pattern and instead considers the provinces as a distinct market for goods.

The third original aspect of this research is that a methodology is developed for using various sources for considering issues of consumption. Some of these sources have been well used, but by historians with a different agenda to my own. Others have not been utilised for studying consumption patterns of this period. This combination of sources and the qualitative analysis of them suggests that the home can be studied and interpreted in periods outside living memory, depending largely on documentary sources, which still allows the creation of the domestic interior to be examined in all its complexity.

SECTION 1

The Trade and the Consumers

Chapter 2

The Trade: furniture making and selling in the West Midlands

This chapter examines the furniture trades in the West Midlands between 1760 and 1860. The tradesmen considered as constituting the furniture trades are cabinet makers, upholsterers, cabinet case makers, carvers and gilders, chair makers and furniture brokers. Sometimes these skills were offered separately and sometimes in combination, either with each other or in conjunction with other skills and services such as carpentry. Furniture making has often been dealt with as a celebration of genius; the élite makers and designers. This has resulted in a concentration on London furniture makers and on the making and designing aspects of the trade.[1] This study focuses on the more general provision of furniture and furnishings rather than concentrating solely on furniture making, that is, the cabinet making and upholstery trades, which has generally been the case with furniture history.[2] A wider view is taken here, to include the retailing of new and second hand furniture. This allows the development of the trades to be seen in relation to each other and for the concerns of the consumers to be taken into account. Consumers did not have the pure approach of the furniture historian, their agenda was rather different; to acquire by what ever means available, an item of furniture to suit their requirements.

The furniture trades need to be examined to determine differences over the geographical area and changes over time and thereby determine how the trades met changing market demands and how it stimulated demand. Although the emphasis is on the West Midlands London provision will be touched on by way of comparison and because some trade practices originated there, the cabinet makers' union activity

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[1]For example H. Hayward and P. Kirkham (1980), *William and John Linnell*, London: Studio Vista; C. Wilk (1981), *Marcel Breuer: Furniture and Interiors,* New York: Museum of Modern Art.
[2]For example the excellent G. Beard and C. Gilbert (1986), *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers 1660-1840,* Leeds: Furniture History Society, does not include furniture brokers and therefore their survey is incomplete.

for example. A number of towns in the West Midlands were chosen which reflected the variety of towns across the area; Birmingham, Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Bridgnorth, Stone and the towns constituting the Potteries.[3] (see Map 1)

Birmingham became England's second city in the nineteenth century but in the early eighteenth century it was less important than Coventry, in the same county of Warwick. Metal trades were the main reason for its spectacular and rapid growth; the population doubled in the early nineteenth century. Improvements were gradual and it was not until the 1870s that Birmingham saw its character changed drastically with new streets laid out, and impressive public buildings, shops and banks. Throughout the period much of Birmingham was in poor condition with a few central streets distinguished by smart shops and gas lighting and the suburb of Edgbaston to the west of the town developing as a retreat for the middle classes.[4]

Shrewsbury as the county town of Shropshire was an important administrative centre, it was also the only town of any size for a large agricultural area to the west, towards the Welsh border country and therefore was a draw for shopping, especially on market days. There was a decline in its textile trade by the end of the eighteenth century and little development of new industry. A great many large houses of gentry and wealthy people in trade or professions were situated in or near the town, which had the added attractions of horse racing and other leisure facilities. The centre of Shrewsbury retained it medieval street plan and was slow to 'improve'.[5]

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[3] The West Midlands is an inland area and therefore patterns of trading were distinct from those of larger ports such as Bristol and Liverpool and their surrounding areas. However, the West Midlands had river and canal links which were necessary for the supply of materials and the dispersal of manufactured goods so it did not suffer from isolation during the period.

[4]For a history of Birmingham see Gordon E. Cherry (1994), *Birmingham: A Study in Geography, History and Planning,* Chichester: Wiley.

[5]See Barrie Trinder (ed.) (1984), *Victorian Shrewsbury: Studies in the History of a Country Town,* Shrewsbury: Shropshire Libraries.

Wolverhampton had long been an important market town and although only fourteen miles from Birmingham it served a rather different market. The success of its metal trades caused the town to increase in size and population. The rapidity of the growth resulted in overcrowding and poor sanitation. New streets of smarter housing were constructed only to be swallowed up by the industrial growth in a few years.[6]

The town of Bridgnorth depended largely on river trade on the Severn during the eighteenth century, which was replaced by carpet manufacture in the nineteenth century. The population increased during the period and for its size it had a large stock of good houses, and an above average number of professional and middle class residents.[7]

Stone was a small market town but which had an important role as a staging post on the London and Chester to Ireland routes. Although this role declined when the Grand Junction railway was built the Trent and Mersey canal and the Birmingham to Liverpool canal were close to the town and added to its prosperity. Various trades were carried out and the favourable conditions were reflected in the population growth. Despite these advantages Stone was dominated by its large neighbour, Wolverhampton, which perhaps affected the nature of its commercial activities.[8]

The area known as the Potteries, in north Staffordshire, was a fairly small area made up of a number of small towns and villages. When the pottery industry took off in the later eighteenth century these separate towns and villages grew rapidly, in size and population, but were slow to develop a stronger urban character.[9]

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[6]G. J. Barnsby (1976), *A History of Housing in Wolverhampton 1750-1975,* Wolverhampton: Integrated Publishing Services, pp. 9-12.
[7]Malcolm Wanklyn (1993), 'Urban revival in early modern England: Bridgnorth and the river trade, 1660-1800', *Midland History*, volume 18, pp. 37-64, pp. 51-3.
[8]See A.F. Denholm (1988), 'The impact of the canal system on three Staffordshire market towns 1760-1850', *Midland History*, volume 13, pp. 59-76.
[9]*National Commercial Directory of Staffordshire,* 1835, London: Pigot, pp. 425-427.

These towns in the West Midlands can now be examined for representation of furniture trades compared to their population figures during the period.

Table 2:1 Population figures for the chosen towns and all furniture makers/suppliers included in selected trade directories 1783-1851.

Towns	Furniture provision 1783-5	Population 1801	Furniture provision 1809-22	Population 1821	Furniture provision 1830-34	Population 1831	Furniture provision 1849-50	Population 1851
Birmingham	37	71,000	87	85,416	266	144,000	440	233,000
Shrewsbury	1	14,739	11	19,602	38	21,297	46	19,681
Bridgnorth	0	4,408	3	4,345	5	5,298	8	6,172
Wolverhampton	0	12,565	30	18,380	47	24,732	70	49,985
Potteries	0	35,000	43	60,000	48	80,000	69	112,000
Stone	0	5,373	2	7,251	2	7,808	0	8,736

N.B. The lack of provision in the 1780s does not mean that no tradespeople existed but that the trade directories did not list them. The reliability of trade directories is a problem throughout the period but they were particularly selective before the early nineteenth century. However, using directories does give an idea of the relative levels of provision in the towns.

There is to some extent a correlation between the increase in traders and in population during the period, however it is perhaps an obvious point that increase in population does not necessarily correspond, proportionally, with increases in furniture provision. It is the nature rather than the numbers of potential customers that dictate the traders to serve them. Understanding the nature of the differing markets for furniture is crucial to this research. The West Midlands region, during the classic industrialisation period, underwent varying degrees of urbanisation and this had implications for consumption patterns. In simple terms the numbers of cabinet makers and allied trades increased over the period, accelerating in line with population growth for two towns; Birmingham and Wolverhampton. While a steady increase was also visible in Shrewsbury despite a decrease in population. The smaller towns of Bridgnorth and Stone were both declining in importance during the period but a slightly more dynamic position is suggested by the figures for Bridgnorth. There was only initial growth in the Potteries followed by a fairly static period despite an increase in population. Both the numbers and types of trade together with population figures and social make-up of the towns will need to be scrutinised for patterns to emerge.

The nature of the West Midlands at this time makes it a particularly useful case study. The West Midlands was at the heart of the industrial revolution with dramatic changes to many trades particularly iron production and metal goods. Although these trades are not directly considered here the changes to the region are vitally important. Any changes within the middling ranks, due to increased wealth through industrial manufacture and commercial interests, will be represented in the local furniture makers' customers.[10] By choosing a variety of towns within the West Midlands for

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[10]Branca summarises the growth of the middle class between 1803 and 1867 showing the largest increase at the bottom end of the middling sort (with an income under £100 per year), from 32,000 to 757,250 familes and the middle (with an income between £100-£300), with a rise from 197,300 familes to 637,875. There was a smaller increase at the upper end of the middling sort (with an income over £300) from 64,840 in 1803 to 150,000 families in 1867. Patricia Branca (1974), 'Image and Reality: The Myth of the Idle Victorian Woman', in Mary S. Hartman and Lois Banner (eds), *Clio's Consciousness Raised,* New York: Harper, p. 183. However as Campbell has pointed out the

consideration, the change from an aristocratic/gentry led economy within the furniture trade, to middle class tastes and requirements predominating, should be discernible. Such changes may reveal a distinct middle class culture of consumption if economic changes led to changes in the nature of the furniture trade as well as its size.

The relationship between supply and demand needs to be determined within the context of the period in question; that is a period characterised by industrial change. What must be avoided however, is to see the changes as the simple equivalent of more obvious industrialisation in other trades and therefore the pre 1800 period as markedly different to the post 1800 period; 'pure' craft production with makers retailing their own goods giving way to factory production using steam powered machinery and distribution by 'middlemen'. As others have explained,[11] the craft of furniture making, was affected less dramatically by new production methods found within other trades. Perhaps the most important consideration was the local nature of supply; furniture continued to be made, by often very small firms, for a local market and this encouraged an element of individual or bespoke orders.[12] Cabinet makers and upholsterers offered a personal service which included repairing, making over items and doing maintenance work in the homes of their customers, such as laying carpets, putting up curtains and sometimes painting and decorating. Due to the individual nature of furniture making the trade was able to respond to the changing nature of demand. The changing circumstances of urban living, the greater spending power of the middle class, the changing values attached to the contents of the home,

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connection between income and a propensity to consume is not straight forward and this will be addressed in subsequent chapters. Colin Campbell (1987), *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism,* Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 18-19.

[11]For example Clive Edwards (1993), *Victorian Furniture: Technology and Design*, Manchester: Manchester University Press; Pat Kirkham (1988), *Furniture History*, volume 24, pp. 1-219.

[12]Some customers went to the extra expense of ordering goods from London whose makers were at the centre of the fashionable trade. In some ways London goods were the ideal to aspire to but it must be remembered that the reasons for shopping in London and when to purchase goods locally were many and complex. These issues will be considered in Chapter 4 on Location.

all produced changes in the organisation of the furniture trade and the products it offered to consumers.

The continuance of a bespoke trade should not obscure the fact that these trades were adapting to new trade practices. Many changes and developments to the organisation of the trade, the numbers of makers, their distribution and the nature of the goods they made and therefore the skills required, were all evolving during the period. Although more subtle than the wholesale adoption of large scale factory production or the use of radically new steam powered machinery (although this was the case for some aspects of the London trade and other centres of production such as High Wycombe[13]) most furniture makers, even in rural areas, were adapting their trade practices. Division of labour, greater specialisation of individual firms, and increasingly goods made speculatively and offered for sale in showrooms and an increase in 'middlemen' who retailed products rather than the makers of the objects, and to some extent the creation of demand, through advertising and new retailing techniques, were all employed.

A number of issues need to be addressed, the first is to determine how the trade met the increased demand for goods required by a growing population. Not only were the population and the towns growing in size, with new housing being built but more people were achieving a higher standard of living; a middle class with larger homes requiring more furniture.[14] Did the traders simply increase in number in order to provide more goods? Or did makers adapt what they offered to enable them to make more goods more cheaply than previously? How did the retailing of second hand furniture compare with other aspects of the furniture trade?

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[13]Kirkham (1988), p. 32.

[14]Birmingham's growth took a number of forms; new streets were added that spread into adjoining countryside in the second half of the 18th century, by the early 19th century the centre had added a great many more houses, often using the court style of planning and at the same time distinct middle class suburbs were added such as Edgbaston, these gathered pace around the mid 19th century. Cherry (1994), pp. 42-43.

After considering the increased size of different aspects of the trade this chapter will need to consider the changing organisation of the trade. For example were changes seen as a threat to their livelihood by the trade and were coping strategies developed such as union control and developments in the apprenticeship system?

Growth resulted in greater competition and one knock-on effect was that the trade needed new methods of communicating what they offered and new ways of retailing their wares. How did developments in the advertising of furniture and style of retail establishment reveal the trade adapting their methods, to better meet the changing nature of demand and indeed, to create demand?

The Nature of Provision

In this section the main sources used are trade directories. Data was extracted concerning certain trades which was encapsulated in a database.[15] This exercise was not entirely straightforward as the trade directories varied in comprehensiveness and the style of their entries. The early trade directories were in alphabetical order of trader's name and address, which was followed by the trades/services offered. This provided the tradesperson with the opportunity of describing what they offered quite precisely with individual combinations of trade descriptions. The disadvantage of this system, for the user of the directory, was that particular trades could not be consulted without trawling through all the names. This became problematic as towns grew in size and the entries in directories became extensive.

While trade directory entries were often free at this period, inclusion depended upon the method of collecting information which varied from one compiler to another. For example Shaw and Tipper claim that agents sometimes did not venture into courts to

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[15]See Appendix 2 for an explanation of the database.

collect information, which may have resulted in down-market traders not being included.[16]

The directories became business-like in their approach in order to cope with the growing number of tradespeople to be listed. An orderly style of presentation became normal (but not inevitable) by the early nineteenth century. The directories were increasingly organised by trade headings with the traders listed alphabetically. This system was simple to use but forced the trader to opt for a standardised description, presumably chosen by the directory to reflect common descriptions of trades.[17] Occasionally a tradesperson opted for two entries under different headings, but generally they had to settle for the heading that best described what skills and services they provided.

It can be seen that trade directories offer a far from literal representation of who was practising what trade at any given time. How these characteristics might obscure some of the subtleties of developments within the trade will be explored later in this chapter. What trade directories do offer is a common source for all the towns under consideration and the possibility of using quantitative data to gain an overview of the furniture trade. The first essential was to use the database to establish the numbers of tradespeople at several points during the period and to look for patterns of growth; traditional, new and fashionable methods of furniture making and retailing, in each of the towns under review and in the area as a whole.

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[16]Gareth Shaw and Alison Tipper (1989), *British Directories: A Bibliography and Guide to Directories published in England and Wales (1850-1950) and Scotland (1773-1950)*, London: Mansell, p. 22.

[17]Shaw and Tipper (1989), p. 18. Shaw and Tipper comment that the directories sometimes had problems keeping up with developments within trades. Shaw and Tipper (1989), p. 23.

Table 2:2 Cabinet Makers recorded in selected trade directories 1770-1850 for the chosen towns.

Towns	1770	1783-85	1809-22	1830-34	1849-50
Birmingham	(1770) 19	(1785) 19	(1816) 39	(1830) 76	(1849) 146
Shrewsbury	No data	(1783) 0	(1809) 2	(1834) 12	(1850) 20
Bridgnorth	No data	(1783) 0	(1822) 2	(1834) 5	(1850) 4
Wolverhampton	No data	(1783) 0	(1809) 4	(1830) 5	(1850) 12
Potteries	No data	(1783) 0	(1818) 26	(1834) 28	(1850) 30
Stone	No data	(1783) 0	(1818) 0	(1834) 0	(1850) 0
Total	19	19	73	126	212

The date of the trade directory is in brackets. Many cabinet makers were also described as upholsterers therefore some firms in this table appear again in Table 2:3. The Potteries consisted of numerous towns and villages in close proximity. The towns that appear in the trade directories are Burslem, Cobridge, Hanley, Lane End/Longton, Newcastle, Shelton, Stoke and Tunstall.

Table 2:3 Upholsterers recorded in selected trade directories 1770-1850 for the chosen towns.

Towns	1770	1783-85	1809-22	1830-34	1849-50
Birmingham	(1770) 11	(1785) 12	(1816) 19	(1830) 87	(1849) 61
Shrewsbury	No data	(1783) 1	(1809) 4	(1834) 12	(1850) 15
Bridgnorth	No data	(1783) 0	(1822) 0	(1834) 0	(1850) 0
Wolverhampton	No data	(1783) 0	(1809) 3	(1830) 6	(1850) 8
Potteries	No data	(1783) 0	(1818) 5	(1834) 6	(1850) 29
Stone	No data	(1783) 0	(1818) 0	(1834) 0	(1850) 0
Total	11	13	31	111	113

Included in this table are some Upholders; 3 in Birmingham in 1770, 12 in Birmingham in 1785 and 1 in Shrewsbury in 1783. The term was not used after the 1785 directory.

Table 2:4 Carvers and Gilders recorded in selected trade directories 1770-1850 for the chosen towns.

Towns	1770	1783-85	1809-22	1830-34	1849-50
Birmingham	(1770) 0	(1785) 2	(1816) 5	(1830) 17	(1849) 32
Shrewsbury	No data	(1783) 0	(1809) 1	(1834) 3	(1850) 3
Bridgnorth	No data	(1783) 0	(1822) 0	(1834) 0	(1850) 0
Wolverhampton	No data	(1783) 0	(1809) 0	(1830) 3	(1850) 7
Potteries	No data	(1783) 0	(1818) 1	(1834) 2	(1850) 2
Stone	No data	(1783) 0	(1818) 0	(1834) 1	(1850) 0
Total	0	2	7	26	44

Table 2:5 Cabinet Case Makers recorded in selected trade directories for Birmingham 1770-1849.

Town	1770	1785	1816	1830	1849
Birmingham	0	0	7	19	30

Table 2:6 Chair Makers recorded in selected trade directories 1770-1850 for the chosen towns.

Towns	1770	1783-85	1809-22	1830-34	1849-50
Birmingham	(1770) 0	(1785) 4	(1816) 8	(1830) 18	(1849) 32
Shrewsbury	No data	(1783) 0	(1809) 1	(1834) 1	(1850) 0
Bridgnorth	No data	(1783) 0	(1822) 1	(1834) 0	(1850) 1
Wolverhampton	No data	(1783) 0	(1809) 1	(1830) 0	(1850) 1
Potteries	No data	(1783) 0	(1818) 11	(1834) 12	(1850) 4
Stone	No data	(1783) 0	(1818) 2	(1834) 1	(1850) 0
Total	0	4	24	32	38

Cabinet making and upholstery were the main trades for making furniture. A comparison between Tables 2:2 and 2:3 reveals that whereas cabinet makers almost doubled in number upholsterers had a more uneven growth, for example, in Birmingham they showed a good increase by 1830 but then decreased in number. To understand these figures the use of the joint term 'cabinet maker and upholsterer' needs to be taken into account. The numbers record every instance of a trade being

offered, either under the joint title or under a separate heading for one of the trades. The majority of towns had few if any specialist upholsterers. While the increased use of the joint term implied an increase in both trades, this may have been more to do with labelling than a true reflection of what was offered. It is noteworthy that Shrewsbury had higher representation of these trades than Wolverhampton although the population figures were fairly close initially and Shrewsbury was overtaken by Wolverhampton by the end of the period.

Tables 2:4, 2:5 and 2:6 are for the specialist areas of carvers and gilders, cabinet case makers and chair makers.[18] These three trades were all connected directly to the furniture trade unlike the other wood working trades of joinery and carpentry, which were more concerned with the construction of buildings and their fittings. The specialist areas have been included to illuminate trends in furniture provision; each category being involved in rather different aspects of the furniture trade.[19]

Carvers and gilders were few in number and most occur towards the end of the period when gilded picture frames and mirrors were highly fashionable.[20] But it was also an area where trade practice changed; frames were made of composition[21] rather than carved wood, which was a much easier method. The difference in numbers for carvers and gilders in Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton show slightly more in Shrewsbury. One firm in Shrewsbury, Donaldson, for example, were in operation for many years, before the changes in the trade took place. Donaldson carried out

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[18]Clock makers are another category that are worthy of consideration, however, for this period in the West Midlands they were not listed separately in the directories, except for Birmingham in 1849.
[19]Carvers and gilders were skilled workers and therefore were high up in the furniture making hierarchy. Chair makers were much lower. Bedstead makers, looking glass and picture frame makers were the least skilled and were at the bottom of the hierarchy, but there were no separate headings for these in the trade directories for the West Midlands. Kirkham (1988), pp. 11 and 23.
[20]See Kirkham (1988), pp. 23, 29-30 and 65.
[21]Composition was a mixture of whiting, resin and size, which could be put into moulds rather than carved like wood.

extensive work for Lord Berwick at Attingham Park including the ornate carved side tables which are still in the house.[22] (Figure 2:1)

Chair makers were traditionally a separate trade providing basic goods and were considered rather low in the hierarchy of furniture making.[23] This explains the distribution throughout the region, even Stone had chair makers. Although chair makers increased in number they did not keep pace with the population increase. At the outset of the period most specialist chair makers would have been makers of regional items but there was a decrease in 'vernacular' chair making as more people wanted fashionable furniture.[24] From the 1790s to 1820s 'fancy' chairs were fashionable particularly for bedrooms. These were light-weight chairs often painted and with caned seats. It is conceivable that some regional chair makers switched to fancy chairs with the painting being done by specialists. Thereafter chairs were probably made by cabinet making firms who could provide people with fashionable and smart chairs that matched their dining room and drawing room furniture. In rural areas regional chair making continued but in large urban centres the need for common chairs was supplied by either imported chairs from London and High Wycombe; the 'windsor' chair type that lent itself to large scale production. Or a few local makers become big producers, again, probably windsor type chairs. The 1849 directory for Birmingham for the first time included asterisks that denoted chair makers (all in Digbeth) who specialised in windsor chairs.

Cabinet case makers were producing parts of furniture such as clock cases and small fancy boxes for jewellery, guns and dressing cases. Such items were highly fashionable in the early to mid nineteenth century. Production increased after the introduction of machine cut veneers since the basic cases could be quickly made and

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[22]Donaldson information from Beard and Gilbert (1986) and the National Trust Guide (1998) *Attingham Park, Shropshire,* London: National Trust.
[23]Kirkham (1988), p. 11.
[24]B. D. Cotton (1990), *The English Regional Chair,* Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, p. 288.

then covered to give the impression of better quality.[25] Case makers usually supplied partly finished goods for other sectors of the trade to complete. The growth of this specialised division demonstrates that the bespoke trade was beginning to break down. Their presence perhaps also points to lower status goods being made, to standardised designs and in large numbers. Cabinet case makers only occur in Birmingham, presumably because only Birmingham could support such divisions within the furniture trade.

The large numbers of tradespeople in the furniture trades in Birmingham, the specialisms within the trade such as cabinet case makers and windsor chair makers and, as will be seen later in this chapter, the geographical distribution of certain branches of the trade within the town, all point to the fact that by the early nineteenth century, if not before, Birmingham was the centre for the furniture trades in the West Midlands.

The nature of provision can thus be seen to be subtly different in different towns and reflecting differences in demand.[26] The social make-up of a town and of the customers it attracted from a wider geographical area was an important influence. These differences between towns and the traders they sustained is suggested by the relative numbers of firms who remained in business over considerable periods.[27] Birmingham had a high number going back to the mid eighteenth century showing that it was well established as a retailing centre even before the huge increase in population in the early nineteenth century. Although Wolverhampton was also well established as a market town for a wide geographic area it had relatively few firms

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[25]Kirkham (1988), p. 16 and Adrian Forty (1986) *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750-1980,* London: Thames and Hudson, pp. 56-59.

[26] It must be remembered that the data is incomplete due to the nature of trade directories but since the discrepancies apply to all the towns the available data probably does give a general pattern of provision.

[27]The number of firms who remained in business for twenty or more years were 21 in Birmingham, 19 in Shrewsbury and 4 in Wolverhampton. This information is derived from the database and Beard and Gilbert (1986).

remaining many years in business. Whereas Shrewsbury, with its wide catchment area extending to the Welsh borders, had far more, perhaps due to a high number of aristocracy/gentry using the town throughout the period, as in the case of Lord Berwick patronising Donaldson. It may also indicate a less dynamic situation with a conservative customer base who patronised familiar firms.[28]

Having considered the patterns of distribution and growth of furniture making trades it is now necessary to consider furniture brokers who sold either second hand furniture or furniture made by others, usually of inferior quality some of which was produced in London for sale in the provinces.[29]

Table 2:7 Furniture Brokers recorded in selected trade directories 1770-1850 for the chosen towns.

Towns	1770	1783-85	1809-22	1830-34	1849-50
Birmingham	(1770) 0	(1785) 0	(1816) 49	(1830) 49	(1849) 139
Shrewsbury	No data	(1783) 0	(1809) 3	(1834) 10	(1850) 8
Bridgnorth	No data	(1783) 0	(1822) 0	(1834) 0	(1850) 3
Wolverhampton	No data	(1783) 0	(1809) 0	(1830) 10	(1850) 24
Potteries	No data	(1783) 0	(1818) 0	(1834) 0	(1850) 4
Stone	No data	(1783) 0	(1818) 0	(1834) 0	(1850) 0
Total	0	0	52	69	178

After cabinet makers and upholsterers furniture brokers accounted for the largest category of furniture suppliers. They showed most growth during the period, from no traders described as such in the earliest directories used, to a considerable number by the 1840s, second in number only to cabinet makers. It is possible that the large increase in furniture brokers indicates an increase in down-market trade for both middle and working class customers. Shrewsbury had a steady number but in

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[28]The differences between these three towns follows the urban hierarchy theory suggested by Borsay and which will be furthered explored in Chapter 4. Peter Borsay (1989), *The English Urban Renaissance: culture and society in the provincial town, 1660-1770,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 6-10.

[29] No sources have been found from which to gauge how much London produced furniture reached the West Midlands.

Wolverhampton the increase was large. Comparing Shrewsbury furniture brokers in Table 2:7 with the town's cabinet makers and upholsterers, in Tables 2:2 and 2:3, the town had a larger representation in the latter and an increase over the period. This perhaps demonstrates a different, more up-market trade in Shrewsbury compared to that in Wolverhampton. This would seem logical and yet for the Potteries, a strong working class area, there were remarkably few furniture brokers. It is possible they existed but were too down-market to be listed. Since poorer customers would not have bought a trade directory, it may not have been worth while for some traders to go to the trouble of ensuring an entry. Certainly Shaw and Tipper's remarks about agents not venturing into courts to collect information[30] would lend weight to the idea that down-market furniture brokers might escape inclusion.

There was a link between auctioneers/appraisers and furniture brokers although how the trades overlapped is not clear. Some development of these trades is suggested by the example of Birmingham. By the 1840s the Worcester Street area of Birmingham had a great many furniture brokers whereas in the early nineteenth century, up to the 1820s, the area had a number of auctioneers. Advertisements for some of these auctioneers also offered upholstery services including funeral arrangements. This seems to describe the old style upholder. The term upholder discontinued in the nineteenth century and perhaps too the combination of activities that they performed were in the process of being divided amongst the various branches of the furnishing trade; funerals tending to fall into the range of services offered by cabinet making and upholstering firms.

To put the data base figures into the context of furniture making at this time Kirkham's account of the furniture making trades in London provides a comparison

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[30]Shaw and Tipper (1989), p. 22.

to establish how far the West Midlands coincided with general trends,[31] whether this was true for all the towns looked at and, if there were variations, where these occur and what might be indicated by them. Kirkham's study of the period 1770-1870, found that the most significant development within the trade was the rise and fall of the 'comprehensive manufacturing firm'. By the mid eighteenth century firms were developing which brought together all the furniture making crafts. Kirkham believes that 'The increase in demand for high quality goods was met not by expanding petty production but by increasing the size of the firms and their scope of production.'[32] These firms combined the two main areas of furniture making, cabinet making and upholstery but also the other crafts needed to furnish a house; chair making, carving and gilding etc. These firms generally went by the title of Cabinet Makers and Upholsterers which indicated that the other skills were offered.[33] This rationalisation of firms made them more profitable. They were also well placed to offer a furnishing advice service to people who could not afford the services of an architect.[34]

The demise of the comprehensive firm was linked to the structure of the trade in London. The quality firms or the West End trade became distinct from the East End trade; up-market vs. sweat shops which involved lots of division of labour within a workshop and between workshops. By the mid nineteenth century the East End had begun to supply the West End with inferior, cheaper goods. Finally the up-market outlets declined through competition from furnishing drapers, retailers who bought in furniture. Any indications of similar trends in the West Midlands' provision of furniture would be significant in establishing the nature of provincial trade in the West Midlands and how it changed over time and varied between different markets.

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[31]Mullins for example has said that provincial makers were copying business methods from London manufacturers. Anthea Mullins (1965), 'Local Furniture-makers at Harewood House as Representative of Provincial Craftsmanship', *Furniture History*, volume 1, pp. 32-38, p. 32.
[32]Kirkham (1988), p. 57.
[33]Kirkham (1988), p. 58.
[34]Kirkham (1988), p. 67.

The entries in trade directories were scrutinised for changing descriptions of trades. to indicate trends both in the methods of manufacture and the organisation of the trade, and to some extent to suggest changes to the interface between firm and customer.

Table 2:8 Trade directory entries for individual and combined titles

Trade description	Cabinet makers	Upholsterers	Furniture brokers	Cabinet makers and Upholsterers	Other combinations
Number of tradespeople	312	62	309	179	114

Table 2:8 is a breakdown of trade descriptions showing the bulk of the database entries are for single trade descriptions; however, 293 entries with combinations are recorded - titles that show combinations of furniture making/selling trades. According to Kirkham the title Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer became the universal title for the comprehensive firm in London from about the 1770s. Looking for this title in the trade directories seems to bear out such a development For example, the figures for Birmingham are shown in Table 2:9:

Table 2:9 Numbers for the individual titles of cabinet maker and upholsterer and the combined title.

Trade description	1770	1785	1816	1830	1849
Cabinet makers	16	12	13	1	104
Upholsterers	8	4	10	12	19
Cabinet makers & Upholsterers	3	7	9	75	42

The huge swing in favour of comprehensive firms seems to support Kirkham's argument. However she claims they 'dominated the quality trade until the 1870s'[35] whereas Table 2:9 shows a falling off occurred by 1849. Does Table 2:9 reflect trade directory labelling rather than the nature of the firms? Closer inspection of how the lists were compiled is required. The data, sorted by place and time was investigated to find other frequent combinations of title.

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[35]Kirkham (1988), p. 57.

Table 2:10 Descriptions and qualifications of furniture maker titles in Birmingham in selected trade directories 1770-1850

Date	No.	Description/Qualification
1770	2	Cabinet maker & joiner
1770	3	Cabinet maker & Upholder
1785	2	Cabinet maker & Joiner
1785	1	Cabinet maker & timber merchant
1785	7	Cabinet maker & upholder
1785	1	Cabinet maker & joiner & upholder
1785	1	Chair maker & basket maker
1785	1	Upholder & tailor
1785	1	Upholder & appraiser & auctioneer
1816	1	Chair maker & hardwood gun rod
1816	1	Furniture broker & shop tools
1830	2	Cabinet case maker & clock case
1830	1	Cabinet case maker & toilet case
1830	1	Cabinet case maker & jewellery case
1830	1	Cabinet maker & upholsterer (bedsteads)
1830	1	Cabinet maker & upholsterer (carver)
1830	1	Cabinet maker & upholsterer (mangle maker)
1830	1	Cabinet maker & upholsterer (upholsterer)
1830	6	Cabinet maker & upholsterer (chair maker)
1830	1	Cabinet maker & upholsterer (builder)
1830	1	Cabinet maker & upholsterer (carpenter)
1830	1	Cabinet maker & upholsterer (billiard table adjuster)
1830	1	Carver & gilder (looking glass manufacturer)
1830	1	Carver & gilder picture & looking glass)
1830	1	Carver & gilder (looking glasses & frames)
1830	1	Chair maker & cabinet maker & upholsterer
1830	1	Chair maker (winsor & fancy)
1830	1	Chair maker (& sofa)
1830	1	Chair maker (& spade handle)
1830	2	Chair maker (fancy)
1830	1	Furniture broker (& chair maker)
1830	1	Furniture broker (& dealer in shop tools)
1830	3	Upholsterer (paper hanger)
1830	1	Upholsterer (cabinet maker)
1849	1	Cabinet case maker (mathematical)
1849	1	Carver & gilder (frames only)
1849	2	Chair maker (cabinet)
1849	9	Chair maker (windsor)

Tables 2:8 and 2:10 show that despite what might appear a strong trend towards Kirkham's notion of the comprehensive firm the picture is far from clear. A great many firms still offered the separate skill of cabinet making, while a good number of tradespeople felt the need to distinguish what they offered whether it was to draw

attention to a specific skill, for example mangle making, or gun rod making or to advertise the range of skills and services on offer.

It is at this point that the method for compiling trade directories, referred to at the outset of this section, needs to be considered. The eighteenth century practise of compiling by personal canvas[36] used an alphabetical list which allowed individual descriptions. This gave way to trade headings in the early nineteenth century to take account of the growth in tradespeople listed. The tradesperson could circumvent this 'straight jacket' approach in various ways to express what trades/services they offered; first by relying on a heading that the directory provided to describe a trade, but which might be further modified by the use of asterisks for example, 'Cabinet Makers - those marked * are also Upholsterers'. A second possibility was to have two entries under different headings to encompass the full range of what was offered such as Cabinet makers and Chair Makers (in fact very few traders chose this option probably because of the cost involved[37]). A third possibility was to follow the entry with a further trade offered or qualification of what was offered, these appear in brackets after the name of the trader for example, under Cabinet Case Makers, 'D. Smith (clock cases)'.

The Birmingham directory of 1785 used the alphabetical system with five varieties of cabinet makers; two were also joiners, one was also a timber merchant, one was a joiner and upholsterer as well as cabinet maker, seven were combined cabinet maker/upholsterers and five were entered simply as cabinet makers. The rich variety of permutations were reduced in the 1816 directory, which simply had two headings, one for cabinet makers and one for upholsterers, and some firms chose to be in both lists.

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[36]Shaw and Tipper (1989), p. 22.
[37]Shaw and Tipper (1989), p. 23.

A greater variety returned in the 1830 directory, not by increased headings but with extra notes following entries to indicate specialisms. The 1830 directory was produced by Pigot and this tendency seems to be peculiar to that firm.[38] This method perhaps reflected the truer situation, with many tradespeople offering a range of skills and services that depended on the skills of the workers employed and the establishment of a good trade in a particular branch of furniture making.

In Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton there were sufficient numbers of furniture makers to show a similar mix of trade descriptions as seen in Table 2:10, for Birmingham. Other towns were too small for patterns to emerge, except in the Potteries where there was a distinct move towards greater conformity. However, since the Potteries' figures are all derived from the same trade directory the idea of the directory imposing the heading must be taken into consideration.

Taking the figures overall there was a move towards the uniform title cabinet maker and upholsterer by the 1830s. The 1830 directory for Birmingham used the 'comprehensive firm' title of 'Cabinet Makers and Upholsterers' and the majority of firms were placed under this heading with just one firm opting for the separate heading 'Cabinet Maker'. While the 'comprehensive' title decreases in use for Birmingham by 1849 the other towns virtually only use the combined description. Whether this was the true picture is questionable when the use of the qualifying comments is taken into account. The 'comprehensiveness' was reduced in the 1849 directory with the heading 'Cabinet Makers' with an * to denote those who were also upholsterers. It might also be the case that despite the seeming 'comprehensiveness' the 1830 directory used extra notes for the firms to signal to potential customers the actual nature of the firm and the level of expertise that they could offer. For example, a chair maker might distinguish themselves from those offering 'windsor' by

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[38]For example the entries for the Potteries in the *National and Commercial Directory of Staffordshire* (1835), London: Pigot.

stating that they were 'fancy' chair makers. A Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer in the directory who followed their entry with '(bedsteads)' seems to suggest a limited range rather than a comprehensive one.[39]

A final way of questioning the notion of 'comprehensive' firms is to see how tradesmen described themselves in the Census returns. No example was found of a trader describing themselves as a 'cabinet maker and upholsterer'. Two examples of Birmingham tradesmen illustrate how descriptions varied in the census and directories:

Thomas Colbourne in Worcester Street
1841 Census - Upholsterer
1851 Census - Cabinet maker
1830 and 1849 directories - Cabinet Maker & Upholsterer[40]

William Martin in Worcester Street
1841 Census - Upholsterer
1851 Census - Furniture Broker
1830 and 1849 directories he has a separate entry, in each of these categories

Very few people appear as upholsterers in the census returns and most were women whose names do not appear in the trade directories. A few women were in business on their own account as upholsterers but most women who worked as upholsterers were employed by firms. Women did not serve apprenticeships and most often carried out the less skilled work of stuffing mattresses and seat furniture although they might also make up window curtains and bed hangings, except for the cutting out process.[41] It is also probable that some women carried out sewing work on upholstery without having an entry in trade directories.[42] Twice entries showed a husband and wife offering both trades, for example:

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[39]Bedstead makers were at the bottom of the furniture making hierarchy. Kirkham (1988), p. 22.
[40]A similar division of labour may also have been the case with the Ethell family, various branches of which appear in trade directories during the period. For example Stephen and Ann Ethell are recorded in Ann Street in 1830 as Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer and Paper Hangers.
[41]Kirkham (1988), p. 35. See also P. Kirkham (1995), '"If You Have No Sons": Furniture-making in Britain' in Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham (eds), *A View From the Interior: Women and Design,* London: Women's Press.
[42]The work of independent female upholsterers will be considered in Chapter 7 on Gender.

William Bradley, Bromsgrove Street, Cabinet Maker (1841 Census)
Sarah Bradley, Upholsterer (1841 Census)

(They were not in any trade directories although in 1849 a William Bradley, furniture broker, was listed in the next street).

To conclude this section on the nature of provision within the furniture trades, we have seen that to some extent there seems to have been a move towards regularising what was offered but this is partly due to labelling and throughout the West Midlands a more complicated picture emerges. To what extent this labelling was the case in London might also be considered, after all Kirkham concludes that 80% of firms employed only 1-5 men and therefore could offer a limited degree of 'comprehensiveness'.[43] Certainly a lot of variety and individualism continued to be normal throughout the period. Although the structuring of the trade appears to follow the London lead with an awareness of fashion and an increase in business practices this was perhaps a fairly superficial gloss over a more traditional pattern. It might be that most provincial tradesmen were not able to sustain the scale of operation required for the comprehensive firm.

The Organisation of the Trade

In this section the internal and external working practices of firms involved in the furniture trade are discussed. The internal organisation of the trade, such as the changes and developments within the apprenticeship system and the Cabinet Maker's Union, reflected the pressures put on the trade to produce more goods. This will be followed by a consideration of some of the external aspects; the distribution of firms within towns and how this corresponded with the urban development and use of town centres. These two aspects of organisation both reflected the changing nature of goods and requirements of the market.

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[43]Kirkham (1988), p. 78.

Internal arrangements and developments

The furniture making trades were slow to adopt industrial methods of production although by the early nineteenth century significant organisational changes had taken place. The exact nature of the outcome; the objects produced, how they were sold and the retail experience of the consumer was still to a large degree dependent on the circumstances of the individual town, the part of town the firm was situated in and the variable nature of the market being catered for. Some national trends in the organisation of the trade need to be considered, before moving on to examine the West Midlands.

Long before this period the apprenticeship system in Britain had moved away from the tight regime imposed in the medieval period to limit the numbers of artisans practising a craft. However the furniture making crafts still operated an apprenticeship system of five to seven years although it may have been enforced largely as a means of obtaining cheap labour towards the end of the period. Books were published in the eighteenth century, aimed at parents and their children, giving advice on choosing a profession or trade. Joseph Collyer published his book *The Parent's and Guardian's Directory and the Youth's Guide in the Choice of a Profession or Trade* in 1761.[44] He made clear distinctions between the attributes required for different branches of furniture making. The cabinet maker, according to Collyer, was the most skilled in wood working techniques and needed to be able to read and write, have some drawing skills and be able to understand arithmetic. Most cabinet makers charged ten pounds for an apprentice and only a chest of tools worth 'eight to ten guineas and a little wood' would be required to set up in work.[45] Whereas cabinet makers who ran more extensive retail establishments and those who

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[44]Joseph Collyer (1761), *Parent's and guardian's directory and youth guide, in the choice of a profession or trade,* London: R. Griffiths.
[45]Collyer (1761), p. 86.

exported goods charged more for apprentices since they would acquire additional business skills and it would also cost 'a few hundreds if he sets up in the same manner.'[46] Collyer seems to be describing a comprehensive firm which Kirkham claims required not only capital to establish but would also 'need business acumen as well as knowledge of the production process to run it successfully.'[47] The continuation of the apprenticeship process was described in the diary of cabinet maker, James Hopkinson, who recorded that his parents were required to give £20 for his apprenticeship in 1834 which was to last five years and nine months. This was in Nottingham at 'the leading cabinet and upholstery shop in the town' which had a 'front shop' at the premises in Beast Market Hill where the customers were dealt with.[48]

That Collyer in 1761 made the distinction between mere makers and those who sold from a stock of goods is an indication that many cabinet makers, even at that early date, were conducting business on a complex scale, employing a number of workman and running sophisticated businesses requiring an 'interface' with customers. This was even more true of upholsterers who needed to buy in stock from other branches of the trade. Apprenticeships cost £20-50 and 'an apprentice requires from 100 to 1000l. to set up master.'[49] It was not just the extra costs involved due to the stock of textiles and the goods that might be sold by upholsterers, such as carpets, china and wall paper, but the business acumen to 'keep large shops' and deal with a great many other craftsmen that must have been the deciding factor in the success or otherwise of the upholsterer at this period.

Within the workshops a hierarchy existed that depended on age and experience but also on what skills the workmen had; some trades commanded higher wages than

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[46]Collyer (1761), p. 87.
[47]Kirkham (1988), p. 57.
[48]Jocelyne Baty Goodman, (ed.) (1968), *Victorian Cabinet Maker: the memoirs of James Hopkinson 1819-1894*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 20.
[49]Collyer (1761), p. 286.

others. Examples of workshop practice can be found that perhaps reflect a combination of old and new methods coexisting. Even at the end of the period Hopkinson described a lax system with large amounts of drink consumed[50] which the Master tolerated since he paid his workers piece rates. While at the same time the men organised themselves into what Hopkinson described as a 'very strong union shop' which gave relief to men out of work[51] and which conducted internal courts to settle disputes.[52] Some of their procedures appear to be attempts by the men to retain control of what they produced and of workshop practice generally; as Crossick and Haupt have observed 'in Britain the master in artisan production rejected craft traditions before their journeymen, who sought to preserve it.'[53]

Hopkinson described what might be interpreted as the men preserving the 'mysteries' of the trade when he said he had to pay a shilling for each new job he was taught during his apprenticeship and if he had refused 'no one would have dared to shew me.'[54] Such strong control was also evident in the Cabinet Makers Union both nationally and on a local level. The Union's dealings, setting prices for work and arbitrating in trade disputes, reveals a mixture of conservative resistance to change and a business-like organisation of the trade to protect the work force. By contrast this was also the time when the owners of workshops were introducing business structures designed to produce greater turnover and to deal with the complexities of running a large work force.[55]

The clash between the masters and the work force are readily apparent in the Society of London Cabinetmakers' Job Settling Committee Record Book,[56] which recorded

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[50]Goodman (1968), p. 21.
[51]Goodman (1968), p. 24.
[52]Goodman (1968), p. 23.
[53]Geoffrey Crossick and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (1984), *Shopkeepers and Master Artisans in Nineteenth Century Europe*, London: Methuen, p. 24.
[54]Goodman (1968), p. 21.
[55]Kirkham says that owners delegated to a foreman while they 'managed' the business. Kirkham (1988), p. 82.
[56]Winterthur Library, MSS 742.

disputes, in the 1830s and 1840s. Most problems arose over the piece rates for particular jobs. From the first Price Book in 1793 and the subsequent updatings, the Cabinet Makers' Union used the Price Books to set out how to calculate the price for a job, illustrating it with numerous variations. Inevitably the individual nature of the work meant that slight differences arose over the exact price for making an item or over the interpretation of the details of a process. Apart from such regular and slight disagreements, some disputes were recorded that show clearly that changes were occurring to the organisation of the trade and the manufacturing processes that caused concern for the workmen. For example in 1835 the following dispute was recorded:

> August 9th Mr Reynolds and Mr Carplin from Dowbiggin had to lay a statement before the Job Settlers respecting the shaping of Table rims that had been done by Buhl Cutters, they had a shop meeting and appointed a deputation to wait upon the foreman to inform them that they would not fix them in future if they did not shape them.[57]

The Job Settlers Committee recorded that they approved of the men's actions although how Dowbiggin, the employer, reacted was not recorded. This example of specialist work being done outside the shop and brought in for finishing was a common development in the industrialisation of the trade and clearly the journeymen resented it. Another example of resistance to change, this time relating to the introduction of machinery, was recorded in 1837 and resulted in four resolutions being passed by the Committee. The case concerned 'Canted work done by a machine'. No particular firm or workmen were recorded in connection with this problem so presumably it was a general concern at the time. Reproducing the first resolution will be sufficient to give the tone of the Committee's response; 'it is the opinion of this Meeting that when such work is introduced, it requires extra Care from the workman and that he is entitled to some remuneration for the same.'[58] This

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[57]Winterthur Library, MSS 742, p. 305.
[58]Winterthur Library, MSS 742, p. 292.

resolution demonstrates Crossick and Haupt's observation that journeymen resisted the changes introduced by the master; the journeymen wanted to preserve the need for their craft skills, to ensure a sufficient quantity of work to keep them in employment and to maintain an adequate payment for their labours. Cost cutting methods went against these concerns.

When we turn to the West Midlands we see that similar developments in the internal organisation of the trade were also present although the evidence is fragmentary. The Census records for Birmingham in 1841 and 1851 record numerous examples of young men giving their occupation as 'cabinet maker's apprentice'.[59] So the apprenticeship system was still in operation although, since Birmingham was not incorporated, the guilds had less influence and apprenticeships were less systematic.[60] Many examples of cabinet makers in the 1851 Census revealed that they had moved to the town from other parts of Britain and some from other European countries.[61] The large number of immigrants to the town gave a new and dynamic population, where traditions might be expected to have broken down.

The size of firms in the West Midlands is difficult to gauge, however the totals for the 1851 Census give 1,027 Cabinet Makers in Birmingham,[62] which is a far larger figure than is represented in the 1849 trade directory.[63] This could indicate a great many journeymen and apprentices in employment in this aspect of the furniture trade.

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[59]For example in the 1841 Census in Edgbaston Street, Thomas Skidmore, 45, Cabinet maker and Adam Crompton, 15, Cabinet maker's apprentice are recorded at the same address. While in Worcester Street Mary Hammond, 50, Cabinet maker, is living with her family and all her sons are following in the trade; William Hammond, 25, Cabinet maker, James Hammond, 20, Cabinet maker's apprentice and Benjamin Hammond, 15, Cabinet maker's apprentice.

[60]Cherry (1994), p. 29.

[61]Most people who were not born in Birmingham seem to have come from the immediate area, with a good many from neighbouring counties but also from London. Examples include; Henry Myers, furniture broker in Dudley Street, Thomas Dawson, cabinet maker in Suffolk Street and Frederick Apletree, upholsterer in New Street and Thomas Colborne, cabinet maker in Worcester Street. While Simon King Marks a cabinet maker in Edgbaston Street was from Poland. Information taken from 1851 Census.

[62]Eric Hopkins (1989), *Birmingham: the first manufacturing town in the world 1760-1840,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, p. 53.

[63]146 cabinet makers are recorded in the 1849 directory though this figure would not include all firms.

The subscribers to *The Cabinet Maker's Assistant*,[64] in 1853 recorded that a copy was purchased by 'Jas. Reynolds, Foreman at Ashford and Jenkins' Digbeth'. The use of the term 'foreman' signifies a concern with a large work force. There are various indications that Digbeth was the area for firms who were probably not dealing direct with the public but producing on a large scale and supplying furniture retailers.

Various regional supplements appeared following the publication in 1793 of the London *Cabinet Makers' Book of Prices*.[65] These supplements were all produced by the Cabinet Makers' Union in larger towns.[66] The *Birmingham Price Book* was published in January 1803[67] providing another indication that Birmingham was the centre of the furniture trade in the West Midlands by the early nineteenth century. The *Birmingham Price Book* covered items missed from the 1793 publication such as chairs, but perhaps more importantly covered items that were particularly made in Birmingham, such as gun cases and Venetian folding blinds, items which complemented other trades in Birmingham. The Birmingham Supplement was produced by the Birmingham Society of Cabinet Makers who also printed an eight page *Articles of Agreement* in 1808.[68] The frontispiece reads: 'Articles of Agreement made between the Members of the Society of Cabinet Makers, who have agreed to meet at the sign of The Green Man, in Moor Street, Birmingham.' This booklet set out arrangements for meetings, the time, frequency and methods for electing members to the committee as well as fines for refusing to serve, turning up late etc. There were no references to what the committee would meet to discuss, but

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[64]P. Thompson (1853), *The Cabinet Maker's Assistant*, Edinburgh and London: Blackie and Son.
[65]The first was published in 1788 but the 1793 edition was more comprehensive. The 1793 edition has been reprinted by *Furniture History* with a list of supplements by both the London Cabinet-Makers' Union and those of other towns. Christopher Gilbert and Pat Kirkham (1982) (eds), 'London and Provincial Books of Prices: Comment and Bibliography', *Furniture History*, volume 18, pp. 1-266.
[66]Other known supplements are for Birmingham, Bolton, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Nantwich, Nottingham, Preston, and Whitehaven. Gilbert and Kirkham (1982), pp. 18-19.
[67]*A Supplement to the London Cabinet Makers' Price Book of 1797 As Agreed in Birmingham January 1 1803,* (1803), Birmingham: printed by M. Swinney. BRL MS 108061.
[68]*Articles of Agreement made between the members of the Society of Cabinet makers, who have agreed to meet at the sign of The Green man, In Moor Street, Birmingham,* (1808), Birmingham: printed by T. Wood. BRL MS 72309.

presumably they settled disputes in the manner of the London Job Settlers Committee. The booklet suggests that the society was attempting to prohibit the kind of behaviour described by Hopkinson, with fines imposed for drunkenness and fighting during meetings.

External organisation - the public interface

As Crossick has pointed out; 'some towns with a substantial commercial and service function, where tertiary activities and small consumer industries proliferated [gave] a distinctive character to the local social structure'.[69] This applied to regional centres but also county and market towns. The towns examined here represent a mixture of such centres of importance with a corresponding market.

The Birmingham directories of 1770 and 1785 show that the furniture trades were almost all situated in the centre of the town - not surprising at a time when the town was still relatively small. (see Map 2) The exception was a cluster of firms in the district south of the centre in an area that was originally a separate village called Deritend that was swallowed up by Birmingham in the later eighteenth century. Due partly to geographical features (a horseshoe hill formation) Birmingham divided into a residential area and an industrial area. In 1776 Birmingham was described as 'a very large populous town, the upper part of which stands dry on the side of a hill; but the lower is watry, and inhabited by the meaner sort of people.'[70] The former centred around New Street while Deritend was situated in the lower industrial area although it also became important for street trading (for example the cattle market was here from 1776 with the Shambles near it until they were cleared away in the nineteenth century[71]). So by the later eighteenth century the furniture making firms appear to be

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[69]Crossick and Haupt (1984), p. 62.
[70]George Beaumont and Henry Disney (1776), *A New Tour through England,* quoted in Walter Showell (1885), *Dictionary of Birmingham,* Oldbury: Showell and Son, p. 3.
[71]Showell (1885), p. 286.

divided between these two areas and probably reflecting the nature of manufacture and market they catered to.

It may well be the case therefore that Digbeth/Deritend was the area for the larger workshops producing goods for sale elsewhere and to some extent supplying the shops in the central Birmingham area. Although not conclusive this will be further explored later in this chapter when the distribution of the trade and how this relates to hierarchy within the trade is discussed. If this explanation is accepted then we can see Birmingham mirroring the 'West End/East End' split in the London trade.

Table 2:11 Areas in Birmingham where the furniture trades were concentrated.

1	2
'Central area'	**'South Central'**
New Street	Digbeth
High St	Bradford St
Dale End	Cheapside
Moor St	Bull Ring
Snow Hill	Deritend
Bull St	
Steelhouse Lane	

3	4	5
'Worcester Street Area'	**'Gt Hampton St Area'**	**'West Area'**
Worcester St	Great Hampton St	Broad St
Pershore St	Constitution Hill	Suffolk St
Dudley St	Ann Street	
Bromsgrove St	Livery St	
Hurst St		
Edgbaston St		

Area 1 was the old centre of the town where the better shops had been situated. Area 2 represents the area of Digbeth and what had been the separate village of Deritend and the cluster of streets radiating around it. Area 3 is made up of mostly old streets which were less up-market than Area 1 (tanneries had been situated here into the eighteenth century). The area was growing in the early nineteenth century and spreading out from the centre, for example Pershore street was established in 1825. Area 4 was made up of a couple of old streets (Ann street and Livery street) to the

north of the central area but these led into new streets that were added in the second decade of the nineteenth century making this a northern development of the town. Area 5 was a much later development and linked to suburban growth to the west of Birmingham.

Table 2:12 The development of the furniture trades by area in Birmingham 1770-1849.

	1770	1785	1816	1830	1849
Area 1	12	12	26	23	17
Area 2	4	5	6	8	22
Area 3	0	0	38	50	60
Area 4	0	0	7	20	48
Area 5	0	0	2	3	16

(The remaining furniture trades people were in scattered locations about the town.)

The totals of firms in Birmingham recorded in the database are summarised in Table 2:12 in the areas set out in Table 2:11. Area 1, in the centre of Birmingham began the period with half of the total number of firms and diminished in importance proportionally. The firms existing in the area in 1830 and 1849 were almost all 'makers' as opposed to 'brokers', (with the exception of those in Moor street and 1 broker, in 1830, in Snowhill). In 1830 the central area was still important for 'makers' with 21 firms (compared with 22 in the Worcester Street area) though the numbers dropped by the trade directory of 1849. The definition of 'maker' is here used rather loosely since these firms may have been predominantly retailers of goods made by other firms, an aspect which will be examined in more detail. It is probable that Birmingham's comprehensive firms were mainly situated in this area, for example Hensman, Smallwood and Apletree. (Figure 2:2)

Area 2 also began well with a quarter of the total firms, but the numbers diminished over time. This may be explained by the firms in this area growing in size rather than number. Again the proportion of makers to brokers remained high, with only

Cheapside having a high number of brokers. It seems likely that this was the area in which the wholesale makers were situated, as already noted the 1849 directory gave specialist windsor chair makers here. The Digbeth firm, Edwin Cooke, placed an advertisement in a trade directory in 1858 offering to produce 'Bed Pillars, Cabinet and Sofa Legs, Table Legs.....to the Trade at exceedingly low terms for cash'.[72] Although this is a typical thing for turners to do; to supply parts for other tradespeople to utilise rather than to produce finished items, the fact that he was situated in Digbeth helps flesh out the picture of the trade there. By contrast a central firm, Eld and Chamberlain in Union Street, produced an extensive catalogue in c. 1860[73] listing numerous styles of beds, produced by substituting differently turned bed posts. This is an example of what typified nineteenth century furniture production; not directly industrialised but easily interchanged components, utilising division of labour, to give large choice. Eld and Chamberlain's geographical position also reinforces them as furnishers who were largely retailers. A final example of divisions within the trade being linked to location is the example of cabinet case makers. By the 1830 and 1849 directories case makers were predominantly in Areas 2 and 4, the industrial areas where rents were low. A few case makers gave Area 1 addresses where their goods would have found suitable customers but perhaps these were only retail addresses for goods made elsewhere. Kendall and Son, makers of toilet cases, gave a retail address in New Street and a wholesale address in Lombard Street, thereby clearly defining the Digbeth role for making goods that were then sold in Area 1.

Area 3 had a rather different development. In 1770 the trade had no presence in the area, but by 1816 approximately 30% of the total was located there. It diminished slightly by 1830 with c. 25% and although falling still more by 1849 it retained a large number of furniture firms; 60 entries in the 1849 directory. The leap in

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[72]*General and Commercial Directory of Birmingham* (1858) Birmingham: Dix.
[73]Eld and Chamberlain catalogue, BRL, MS 1081/1.

importance was due to the large number of brokers in 1816. This predominance continued with c. 75 brokers to c. 53 makers in total. The two streets, Worcester and Bromsgrove, were particularly important for brokers. The rise in number of brokers, in areas 3 and 4, mirrors the increase in this trade generally in Birmingham (while cabinet makers doubled in number between 1830 and 1849, brokers almost tripled, and became almost as many in total).

Of all streets in Birmingham, Worcester Street had the highest level of tradesmen represented over the entire period - with 81 firms recorded in the database (next in number was Great Hampton Street with 27, then a few streets had just under 20). The concentration of this aspect of the trade requires as much scrutiny as the firms in New Street, the smartest shopping street, and is an instance of the need to take furniture brokers into account when considering furniture provision.

A number of points about area 3 need to be dealt with in order that the nature of the trade there can be established. The first is the nature of the area itself. It contained poor quality housing, the River Rea was heavily polluted[74] and many streets had old, narrow courts off them adding to the generally run down atmosphere. Worcester Street itself had, from 1833, entrances to the newly erected Market Hall[75] which would have increased its importance as a retail area. However, this did not improve its image; an engraving of the Worcester Street entrance conveys the impression that the market spilled out into the street with carts all over the road and piles of wicker baskets everywhere.[76] No doubt there was a link between the status of the area and of its customers.

Secondly, greater detail is required about the firms in this area using other sources to ascertain whether they were small, medium or large. A number of the furniture

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[74]Showell describes it as 'Long little better than an open sewer'. Showell (1885), p. 268.
[75]William Hutton (1835), *The History of Birmingham*, Birmingham: James Guest, p. 64.
[76]Reproduced in Cherry (1994), p. 57.

brokers in the trade directories were at the same address, a number of properties supporting two and three traders, pointing to small concerns probably of low status. Firms in this area did not use advertisements in the backs of trade directories, which involved a payment, again pointing to low status businesses. Although the fact that they were so heavily represented in the trade directories points to a high profile of some kind (Shaw and Tipper say they were likely to be subscribers to the directory[77]). (Figure 2:3)

Thirdly, a relatively high number of women were in involved in the furniture trade in area 3. Most were listed as furniture brokers and it seems that women participated in this branch of the business far more than the furniture making trades.[78] One example using information taken from both the Census and trade directories will show the part women played in the continuation of a family business.

Mary Davis
1830 directory - Joseph Davis Furniture Broker
1841 census - Mary Davis Furniture Broker
1849 directory - Mary Davis Upholsterer
1851 census - Mary Davis Upholsterer

Note the changing description employed, from furniture broker to upholsterer. Although not always or necessarily the case, the prevalence of women in the trade in this area, might also indicate that these were small and down-market firms.[79]

Finally, up to the 1830 directory chair makers were mostly found in areas 2 and 3 and in the 1849 directory these two areas continued to be strongly represented. No chair makers had addresses in area 1. This corresponds with the idea of chair making

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[77]Shaw and Tipper (1989), p. 37.
[78]The total entries of women traders in the database is 46. Ones or twos in early directories or for smaller towns, 9 in Birmingham 1816 and 15 and 16 in 1830 and 1849 respectively. Most were furniture brokers, a few were upholsterers with just a couple of examples of other trades.
[79]Kirkham references a female furniture broker in London with an elegant trade card dated 1748. Kirkham's research found that furniture firms run by women were in a minority and that generally women worked at the lower end of the trade. Kirkham (1995), pp. 118-9.

being low down on the furniture making hierarchy, plus the possibility of a few firms making chairs on a large scale, in the more down-market areas.

Area 4 round Great Hampton Street only began to develop after the Napoleonic wars. It was largely an area of industry and working class housing. It is not surprising therefore that the furniture trade was unrepresented in 1816, though from then there was a steady rise so that by 1849 48 firms were located there. These were mostly furniture brokers which was in keeping with the nature of the settlement.

Area 5 became important for furniture trades towards the end of the period. In the early nineteenth century Broad street was still described as little more than a dirt track but this was the route to Edgbaston, a separate village that developed as a smart middle class suburb and by 1825 it had lost its rural nature with 'elegant villas'. The population of Edgbaston had grown to 6,609 by 1841 and it had become important as a middle class strong hold (working class housing was excluded),[80] which is reflected in a separate trade directory being published in 1853 just for Edgbaston.[81] This directory did not include the metal-ware firms that were important for Birmingham and instead concentrated on makers and retailers that catered directly for the middle class consumer's needs. Many of the advertisements in the back were for furniture suppliers of one kind or another, therefore it was aimed at individual consumers rather than the trade. The figures for this area in the 1849 directory show a good number of makers and few furniture brokers.

It is clear from this analysis of the development of Birmingham that it shaped the nature of the furniture trade in the town. It could be said that Birmingham adhered to a similar division as London with the West End and East End divisions described by Kirkham. However the picture is less clear cut, mainly due to the inclusion of

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[80]Hopkins (1989), p. 121.
[81]*Edgbaston Directory and Guide* (1853), Birmingham: Joesbury.

furniture brokers. While the central area contained the retailers of the highest status it has still to be established to what extent they were still makers of furniture during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Birmingham was a large and growing centre of trade and commerce. As the centre of the furniture trade in the West Midlands, it was able to support specialists like cabinet case makers who were found no where else in the region. Birmingham had a larger catchment area of customers than anywhere else in the West Midlands and a large number of traders to satisfy this demand. This makes it easier to identify patterns emerging. These conditions were not so pronounced in the other towns used in this study although to some extent patterns are discernible in Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth and Wolverhampton which correspond with the growth of those towns and the nature of their markets. In Shrewsbury the town was circumscribed by a loop in the river Severn with only gradual urbanisation taking place outside. Not only were most of Shrewsbury's furniture traders found within the loop but almost every street was represented at some point. A concentration did occur however in Wyle Cop and High Street. Here were found mostly makers and only a few brokers, it was probably also where the better class of cabinet makers had their premises, for example Donaldson had his shop in the High Street. By contrast brokers were mostly found in Pride Hill and Castle Street which were less central and in Princess Street which ran parallel to Wyle Cop. The division of the trade in this way no doubt reflected the quality of shops found in the respective streets and the levels of rent to be paid.

The few examples of furniture traders found in the database for Bridgnorth were virtually all found in High Town and mostly in the High Street. High Town was where the better quality houses were situated, whereas Low Town was down by the river and therefore where the bargemen had their premises. Bridgnorth High Street was the principal street for retailing.

The furniture trade in Wolverhampton was found in an ever increasing number of streets during the first half of the nineteenth century; seven streets were represented in 1809, twelve in 1830 and eighteen in 1851. In 1809 they were all situated in the centre of the town but by 1850 they had spread over a much wider area and corresponded with the development of the town. A concentration of makers were found in the southern part of the town by 1850, in Snow Hill, St John's and Worcester Street. This area had been the fashionable residential area in the 1820s[82] but by 1850 with the spread of industry, smarter residential areas were situated further out and the area had been largely given over to commercial premises. Brokers tended to congregate on the eastern side of the town principally in Bilston street no doubt where rents were cheaper.

Thus the various towns examined show by the nature of their provision that they reflected a particular customer base. In Birmingham a clear pattern of development was apparent and to some extent this was discernible in some of the smaller towns but presumably organisation was less distinct in them because the trade was smaller and less complex.

Selling the Goods

Where a firm was situated was linked to its potential customer base; every town had its main shopping streets, often with a few more prestigious than the rest and in a large town like Birmingham distinct retailing areas were developing by the later eighteenth century. As urbanisation spread and the numbers of traders increased and became more varied so competition also increased. Various authors (such as Dyer and Richards[83]) have suggested that the need for sophisticated forms of salesmanship were

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[82]Barnsby (1976), p. 7.
[83]Gillian Dyer (1992), *Advertising as Communication,* London: Routledge; Thomas Richards (1991), *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle 1851-1914*, London and New York: Verso.

not required until the second half of the nineteenth century with the advent of branded goods, advertising and the department store. This view point has been challenged in recent years by a number of historians[84] and it will be demonstrated here that throughout the period tradespeople felt the need to communicate to customers, a knowledge of their goods, along with social and cultural implications to enhance their value. Over time the trade had to address changing patterns of demand for furniture and furnishings and to stimulate new areas of demand.

Advertising

Various methods were employed to win custom; trade directory entries, advertisements in the back of directories, advertisements in newspapers, trade cards and hand bills. As we have already seen the trade directories were used to communicate with both the trade and with individual customers, but this form of advertising was to some extent dictated by the compiler of the directory rather than the tradesperson. The advertisements in the back of the directories reflected far better the individual firm's wishes about their representation. Although no advertisements were found in the West Midland directories before 1800 a significant number were found for Birmingham for the nineteenth century. These can be used to gain an insight into who advertised and the methods employed.

The earliest advertisements found in trade directories followed the same format as trade cards and were probably printed from the same engraved plate produced for that purpose.[85] It would be unproductive to dismiss this form of advertising as 'nothing

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[84]For example John Styles (1993), 'Manufacturing and design in eighteenth-century England', J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds) *Consumption and the World of Goods in Eighteenth-Century England*, London: Routledge; Claire Walsh (1995), 'Shop Design and the Display of Goods in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of Design History*, volume 8, number 3, pp. 157-176; Nancy Cox (2000), *The Complete Tradesmen: a Study of Retailing 1550-1820,* Aldershot: Ashgate.

[85]In the 18th century trade cards were larger than present day business cards and printed on thinner paper thus making the trade card design ideal for use in trade directories and saved the expense of engraving another plate.

more than copies of traders' calling cards, expressing....the basic facts regarding a particular business.'[86] These trade cards and the advertisements that made use of them. reveal a great deal about the nature of a business and the image it wanted to project to potential customers. Similarly, the next two stages of development in the design of advertising, after the trade card style, that have been identified in this research, are equally revealing although they too would be dismissed by many writers on the history of advertising as unsophisticated. Such a writer is Gillian Dyer who claims that before about the 1880s 'advertising was a relatively simple system of proclamation and announcement'.[87] Dyer's categories[88] for interpreting advertisements are informational, simple, compound, complex and sophisticated. She claims that advertisements during the period would come under her 'simple' category, and yet when these documents are studied they appear to be 'compound' or 'complex', by her definitions.

Trade cards, and advertisements that utilised them, used a sophisticated language of images and text to convey messages about the trader and their goods or the services they offered. Although they appear standardised in format, their mixing of emblematic with individual messages was 'read' by contemporaries in a way that might be lost on us. Berg and Clifford have claimed that the 'image can be read as text'[89] in such trade cards. One format was the rococo cartouche surrounding the name and details of the firm plus emblematic images of the objects or tools of the specific trade. This design

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[86]Shaw and Tipper (1989), p. 37.
[87]Dyer (1992), p. 15.
[88]To summarise Dyer's categories of advertisement: 1. *Informational* are classified advertisements that are quite brief and which contain only facts or a mixture of facts and patter.
2. *Simple* advertisements contain information such as the advantages of a product, its convenience, cost etc. If a background setting is used it would be unremarkable although rather better than in real life.
3. *Compound* advertisements use subtle association and persuasion. This type of advertisement contains facts in the copy while pictures are included to show attractive aspects of the product. 'The advertiser is obviously hoping that the reader will associate the *product* with the *total impression*'.
4. *Complex* advertisements 'usually concentrate on the presentation of luxury and status; the background takes over, the product merges into it. The visual and verbal imagery evoke the status feelings associated with money, wealth, elegance, luxury and the public display of these things.'
5. *Sophisticated* advertisements build on the ideas present in complex advertisements by developing emotional and psychological 'stories' around the product.Dyer (1992), pp. 88-92.
[89]Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (1998), 'Commerce and the Commodity: Graphic Display and Selling New Consumer Goods in Eighteenth-Century England', in Michael North and David Ormrod (eds), *Art Markets in Europe 1400-1800,* Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 191.

incorporated fashionable, genteel imagery together with the assurance of a skilled knowledge of the trade concerned, and all in an appropriate form that reinforced the message. The other format most often used, of the interior or the exterior of the premises, conveyed messages about the respectable, well located and elegant atmosphere in which transactions would take place, perhaps with a depiction of a skilled and attentive tradesperson or of customers of a social class that would be acceptable to mix with. Walsh writes convincingly of the desire to produce the right atmosphere in eighteenth-century shops and of how trade cards reinforced the image.[90] These trade cards and advertisements were for the more élite shops and therefore 'spoke' to an élite audience who understood their social and cultural references. They were designed not only to attract custom but, to some extent, to exclude the lower classes. Berg and Clifford suggest they conveyed 'messages of discriminating taste'.[91] This form of advertising utilised a sophisticated means of communication and cannot be dismissed as 'informational' or 'simple' in Dyer's terms or as 'merely' conveying basic information about a trader to use Shaw and Tipper's definition. That traders continued to use the trade card format at the beginning of the nineteenth century for directory advertisements tells us that this form of advertising was thought appropriate, by the traders concerned and for the custom they wished to attract. By noting when and how changes occurred reveals the attitudes and aspirations of traders and their customers.

One advertisement in a trade directory that straddles the emblematic with a strong individual approach is a folded page advertisement featuring the premises of three traders in New Street, Birmingham, one of whom was Hensman, cabinet maker and upholsterer.[92] (see Figure 2:2) The continuance of the trade card format is visible in the use of the roll of paper let down from the end building to give a list of the jeweller and silversmith's stock, and in the use of fictitious emblematic devices on the roofs of

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[90]Walsh (1995), p. 171.
[91]Berg and Clifford (1998), p. 189.
[92]*New Triennial Directory of Birmingham* (1812), Birmingham: Thomson and Wrightson.

the buildings; Le Miroir de la Mode for Hensman, three classical urns for the glass shop and Justice with scales for the jeweller. However, the buildings are depicted quite differently and were probably faithful portrayals of the actual buildings and of how goods were displayed in the windows. The elegance of the three shops, their close proximity and the hint at the gentility of the articles for sale gives a composite picture of the three élite tradesmen. The inclusion of a coach and horses with well dressed customers added to the notion that this was an elegant area in which to shop. Hensman was one of the leading cabinet maker and upholsterers and New street was the centre of fashionable shopping by this period.[93]

The combined effect of the image of the three traders is that each is portrayed as worthy of notice, but each is strengthened by its associations with other elegant trades. Hensman's individual worth is conveyed by the combination of architecture, use of symbolic imagery and references to style and fashion. This advertisement clearly points towards a 'compound' image, the 'association of product with total impression'.[94]

As Walsh has pointed out:

> It was with a particular shop, rather than a particular named product, that the customer first identified before making a purchase.....in the eighteenth century it was, in a sense, the shop which was branded rather than the goods it sold.[95]

In 1812 this was still the case, particularly in a trade like cabinet making where the goods were still largely non-standardised.

An even more persuasive case can be made for the advertisement by Tanner of 1815 where the commodities for sale are made subservient to the total impression created.[96] (Figure 2:4) Drapery curtains and pole form the top-most edge of the picture, framing

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[93]New Street had always been one of the main retail streets but was improved by the pig and horse markets being removed in 1812 by Act of Parliament. Hutton (1835), p. 62.
[94]Dyer (1992), p. 91.
[95]Walsh (1995), p. 171.
[96]*New Triennial Directory of Birmingham* (1815), Birmingham: Wrightson.

the image and the windows beneath with small couch against the pier upon which the advertising copy is written. This listed the services and type of product this trader made or dealt in, while the surrounding image is a total scene; part of an elegant and fashionable room that overlooks a beautiful landscaped garden. The latter is the master stroke of this finely drawn advertisement giving not only scale to the room but exactly the right ambience for the product's consumption: or one to aspire to with the purchase of the objects.

Such engraved images were conceived as a whole; the copperplate writing, the objects or scene depicted and the use of decorative devices linking or framing a design. They achieved therefore a complete pictorial image, mainly because the entire area of the advertisement was available to fill as required. The image and its translation into a copper engraving required an artist and therefore these were a considerable investment.[97] It is not surprising therefore that some examples of this style were less well drawn and were also less ambitious in trying to achieve a total image. For example, the advertisements for Thomas Harris, Furnishing Draper[98] and John Rodway, Appraiser and General Broker[99] (Figure 2:5), both display the less successful uses of engraved images, but they may alternatively demonstrate a downgrading or 'cheaper' style for a more middle class market.

Having achieved these 'compound' and 'complex' images the trade directory advertisements became less exciting visually by about 1840. This was due to the change from an engraved image to a typeset advertisement. This form by contrast imposed a rigid system and discouraged pictorial images, since these would have necessitated a separate engraved plate that would have required two rather one printing impression being made for the full effect. A few advertisements within the period

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[97]M. Twyman (1970), *Printing 1770-1970,* London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, pp. 18-19 Berg and Clifford give some examples of the high prices for producing engraved plates in the later eighteenth century. Berg and Clifford (1998), p. 196.
[98]*Directory of Birmingham* (1835), Birmingham: Wrightson and Webb.
[99]*Triennial Directory of Birmingham* (1823), Birmingham: Wrightson.

made use of wood engraved images,[100] which could be set up with the type and the complete advertisement taken in one pull. The wood block was also capable of thousands of impressions, far more than the delicate metal engraving. Advertising could only return to a fully pictorial image and the use of a freer style both in typography and layout when lithography was introduced.[101]

The link with cost is the most obvious answer for the disappearance of the engraved image; the typeset image using only type could be assembled with great speed and did not require any artistic input and the result could be printed thousands of times with accuracy and speed. Trade directories were being printed in larger print runs but also a wider group of traders were making use of this facility; non élite, with perhaps less aesthetic training and speaking to a predominantly middle class market with different concerns to the élite market of the earlier period. Although gentility and fashion influenced their choice, there were other factors to be taken into consideration and the advertisements expressed this in a variety of forms but without recourse to emblematic devices, instead becoming far more descriptive.

The *Edgbaston Directory and Guide*, of 1853, was unlike the other directories, since it was clearly aimed at a domestic market with virtually all the advertisements being for producers and retailers of furnishings for the home. The emphasis on the middle class consumer in the select suburb of Edgbaston make it particularly interesting to this study. One advertisement appealed directly to the domestic ideology; Thomas Mills, Cabinet and Upholstery Manufacturers offered articles 'so indispensably necessary to

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[100]Wood engraving was revived in the late 18th century but was used mainly for fine prints, the use of wood engravings as illustrations in machine printing became widespread by the mid 19th century. The trade directory advertisements of the 1840s fell between the different methods; copper plates were too expensive for many tradespeople to invest in and other methods had yet to be perfected. Twyman (1970), p. 22.

[101]Lithography was developed in the early nineteenth century but there were difficulties for commercial printing, these were overcome by the mid century. Tyman (1970), p. 28.

make a home a comfort and delight to the family circle'. The wording seems to suggest a 'compound' advertisement by Dyer's definition in its persuasive language.[102]

These later advertisements are revealing both about the organisation of the furnishing trade and its customers. The earlier examples advertised the tradesmen describing them as 'manufacturer' or 'upholder' or 'broker'. But the later ones advertised the premises where the business was conducted using the terms 'emporium', 'showroom', 'warehouse' and 'depot'. The latter descriptions were not used until the 1839 directory and although 'manufacturer' continued to be used it was less frequent. These words to describe the point of sale were in use in the eighteenth century, long before 1839, but it could be the case that these advertisements are significant for demonstrating that such establishments began to advertise more prominently from about that date.

Possibly the use of the terms warehouse and showroom denote a move away from making to selling products made elsewhere. These terms may well have sent an important message to potential customers about the desirability of such retailers as sources of goods; in contrast to the more exclusive maker/retailer the warehouse offered a range of goods with marked prices that were compatible with middle class incomes. The other obvious inference from this wording that stressed the retail establishment is that an extensive stock was kept from which to choose. Several refer to 'viewing' the goods. The earlier advertisements stressed knowledge and skills concerning fashion and choice materials, even though a range of finished articles may have been stocked. Later advertisements stressed the ability to stock a large and suitable range of goods for a middle class market. Different skills were required by both the trader and the customer in the two situations (with a slow change occurring between the two) and the style of advertising allowed for these to be expressed.

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[102]This is not to suggust that 19th century advertising was the same as that of recent years. Berg and Clifford make the useful distinction that earlier advertisements created desire for the object but did not portray the consumer transformed by the product. Berg and Clifford (1998), p. 197.

A final point can be made about trade directory advertisements. Among furniture makers and retailers there was a preponderance of furnishing drapers to use advertisements. Although these firms sold mainly textile items many of them were general furnishers, selling carpets, made up curtains and bed hangings as well as stocking a range of wooden furniture. That these were the type of firm that Kirkham was referring to is evident.[103] Such firms were well placed to offer a complete furnishing service, by buying in cabinet ware as required, to stock their show rooms or to order for a customer, from local makers or from the London trade.

It has been demonstrated that advertising in trade directories took a number of forms during the period and that it conveyed a variety of social and cultural messages as well as 'hard facts' about products and the point of sale. This was also true of newspaper advertisements. Although they did not incorporate visual imagery they employed sophisticated cultural messages. A survey was carried out of the *Salopian Journal* and Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* taking a sample from the 1790s, 1810s and 1830s. The object was to see who advertised from the furniture trades, how often, what goods or services were advertised and what methods were employed. In both publications the advertisements for makers/sellers appeared on a different page from those of auctioneers, who were selling second hand goods. Some attention will be given to the latter in chapter 4.

The advertisements placed by makers/sellers were short and infrequent; they never used images during this period and, although they made use of a variety of typefaces and sizes, they did not use fancy or decorative typefaces, as seen in the later nineteenth century. Stabler found regional variations on who advertised and how frequently,[104] but there was a marked similarity between the *Salopian Journal* and Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*. They always followed a pattern, first thanking their customers

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[103]Kirkham (1988), p. 66.
[104]John Stabler (1991), 'English Newspaper Advertisements as a Source for Furniture History', *Regional Furniture,* volume 5, pp. 93-102, p. 99.

for past 'favours' then going on to inform them of a particular occurrence; for example the separation of partners in a business, the increase in services offered such as a cabinet maker taking up the role of auctioneer and appraiser, the death of the proprietor of a business and his wife taking over the firm, or the new arrival of goods in stock such as wallpapers from London. The advertisements generally ended with an assurance of good service to their future customers, although some advertisements ended rather incongruously with a further and disparate service being offered. For example a trader who callendered bed hangings ended her advertisement with the offer of turning silk stockings. Perhaps this low key style met the expectations of customers as to the appropriate manner for conducting business in the furniture trade. Since the people who used advertising most extensively and most conspicuously at this period were quacks selling miracle cures it may have been seen as bad for business to emulate them. This would also explain Carlyle's disapproval; he called advertising 'ungentlemanly' and 'degrading'.[105]

The Retail Outlet

Having stressed the diversity and complexity of advertising methods and its long term use, it must be said that only a minority of furniture tradespeople advertised. The most important method of promotion, according to Walsh, was the design of the shop. This was to create a business identity.[106] The retail outlet needed to establish its individual identity since the proprietor could not rely on customer knowledge, of the goods they sold in the period before branded goods. This point is no doubt true of the furnishing trades throughout the period 1760-1860. The focus for attention here is the division between making and retailing goods. The transition between these two modes of operation was not clear cut although the division between them seems to have become more pronounced during the period. The quality of the goods and their cultural value

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[105]Quoted in Dyer (1992), p. 29.
[106]Walsh (1995), p. 101.

was closely linked to the circumstances of production and retailing and this quality needed to be articulated through the retail establishment. The changing methods of production and retailing and the way they were resolved by the end of the period perhaps pointed the way towards the total separation of the making and selling of furnishings.

The transition from comprehensive firms who emphasised their ability to both produce and supply the full range of goods for furnishing a home, to the furnishing draper who supplied the full range but bought in the majority of what they sold, can be illustrated through advertisements that depicted the retail outlet and other supporting evidence. Three distinct strands are discernible; firstly the location and ambience of the comprehensive firms, secondly the transition period when firms needed to stress the ability to make furniture, and thirdly the methods employed by furnishing drapers.

It has been demonstrated that the furniture trade divided somewhat in Birmingham, with an increasing trend towards quantity production in the industrial areas and retailing in the central area around New Street. It was within the central area that the comprehensive firms were generally located. The advertisement for Hensman (see Figure 2:2) only found it necessary to stress their position in New Street for a number of other connotations to be implied to their customers; fashion, good taste and quality. It is clear from bills which survive for Hensman, Apletree and Smallwood, all of New Street in Birmingham and from the inventory of Eyken in central Wolverhampton,[107] that such firms carried extensive stocks, including non furniture goods such as ceramics and wall paper. Their ability to keep abreast of changing fashions was essential as too was their need to establish a certain prestige so that they could be consulted in matters of taste by their customers. A smart shop promised to deliver these less tangible attributes as well as bespoke furniture of good quality.

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[107]The work of these firms will be dealt with in Chapter 4. Bills and receipts for Hensman, Smallwood and Apletree, BRL, MBP 447, 468, 469, 474 . Eyken inventory, PRO, PROB 31/678/155.

The gradual division between making and retailing furniture produced a difficult situation for the smaller and less prestigious furniture makers. With the central firms beginning to be supplied with goods made elsewhere and other firms specialising in producing large quantities what role was left for the smaller maker? A number of makers seem to have dealt with this identity problem by carefully constructing advertisements which reassured potential customers of their ability to make goods while at the same time providing attractive retailing conditions. For cabinet makers the messier aspects of making needed to be divorced from the retail side even if at the same time the firm's ability to make goods to order also needed to be promoted. From the wording of advertisements this seems to have been done, where possible, by stressing two addresses for a firm; the showroom and the manufactory were commonly employed descriptions. The advertisement for Mills in Bromsgrove Street goes a step further by depicting the premises from above to show the full extent of what they offered. (Figure 2:6) At the back of the picture was a timber yard and workshops while at the front of the premises was depicted a shop front with fashionable goods displayed and smartly dressed customers. To push home the point, two workmen were shown carrying a finished item through the connecting passage way, to a cart for delivery.

Even at the humble level on which Hopkinson operated achieving the right ambience was important. Hopkinson described setting up in business in Liverpool as late as 1851 and setting up his showroom with furniture he had made, plus goods that he had bought in an auction for the purpose of making a display. The furniture was enhanced by his wife; 'Mrs H. had got some nice ornaments of her own, such as wax fruit and flowers &c which she judiciously spread about so that the shop really looked very nice.'[108] Hopkinson operated on a very small scale without apprentices or journeymen, so he needed auction goods to supplement his stock; he was sometimes described in

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[108]Goodman (1968), p. 96.

trade directories as a furniture broker so presumably this continued to be an important aspect, although he clearly continued to make his own furniture too. He was well aware that having his workshop in a good position was all important to his success; he required a prominent position to attract passing trade but no doubt also to project the right 'business identity'. Although not offering a vast selection, he enhanced his goods by suggesting the domestic setting.

The transition to furniture being sold by furnishing drapers was becoming apparent by the 1850s. Most of the central firms who advertised in the *Edgbaston Directory and Guide* in 1853 seem to have been furnishing drapers, and even those who described themselves as cabinet makers and upholsterers emphasised textiles such as carpets, curtains and table and bed linen. The image that sometimes accompanied the advertisement was always of the retail outlet and depicted the lavish display in the shop window, thereby stressing the act of purchase from a large selection of ready made goods. For example the Eld and Chamberlain image in the *Egbaston Directory and Guide*[109] showed their corner premises, Midland House, with its large plate glass windows filled with banked-up goods. (Figure 2:7) Unlike the architectural images of the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth century these images do not show buildings as an impressive display of élite style but rather they display the size of the establishment and its ability to satisfy customer choice, both for individual objects and for a wide range of goods, from stock items. These firms also wanted to establish the right ambience for selling; large selection, the appropriate quality and price and a respectable atmosphere. Such images appear to speak to a middle class market rather than a small wealthy élite.

By 1860 Eld and Chamberlain had rebuilt their premises and their new shop appeared on the front of their catalogue (c. 1860) and in a coloured lithographic image.[110]

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[109] *Edgbaston Directory and Guide* (1853), Birmingham: Joesbury.
[110] Lithographic image of Eld and Chamberlain's shop in Pershouse Collection, number 160, BRL, MS 897.

(Figure 2:8) Comparing the images from 1853 and 1860 they show a remarkably similar scene; the windows are larger but the display of goods is the same. In both images too are individual female customers, including one on the threshold of the shop. The individual female is also in evidence in the advertisement for Warwick House, drapers, in New Street in c. 1860.[111] That these two drapers in three advertisements chose to promote themselves in this way demonstrates that the draper wished to emphasise that their shops were acceptable for unaccompanied female customers. The images previously discussed, for Hensman and Mills show individual male customers and couples outside the shops. To some extent it seems that in the furnishing drapers the 'masculine' side of house furnishing, the wooden cabinet ware, was being absorbed into the 'feminine' side of furnishing textiles. This aspect will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

The firms described above in many ways correspond with Kirkham's idea that the comprehensive firm, that was able to satisfy customer requirements for most household furnishings, gave way to the furnishing draper by about 1870. The frequency of advertising by firms in the central area and few if any from other areas also points to a higher profile for the firms with a large stock to advertise directly to individual customers. The success of the furnishing draper and their readiness to advertise was in keeping with drapers generally in the mid nineteenth century, who Alexander describes as using aggressive promotion devices, and the move towards department stores seems to have been initiated by drapers in most cases.[112]

Throughout the period the furniture making and retailing trades were still in transition with the furnishing draper rising in importance. However, the split between making

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[111]Advertising image for Warwick House in Pershouse Collection, number 135, BRL, MS 897.
[112]David Alexander (1970), *Retailing in England during the Industrial Revolution*, London: University of London, The Athlone Press, p. 158 and Alison Adburgham (1981), *Shops and Shopping 1800-1914*, London: Allen and Unwin, p. 142.

and selling was not complete at this stage. There was no separate heading in trade directories for the 'furnishing' draper.

Conclusion

Furniture makers and retailers in the West Midlands under went considerable changes during the period, despite the slow adoption of new methods of making furniture and the even slower adoption of new technology. That said, the small traditional firm could still exist, not only in small towns but also in Birmingham, the centre of furniture making and selling in the region. In Birmingham the full range of furniture making and selling were represented; the small regional makers, the small specialists, the comprehensive firms offering a complete furnishing service, the furniture brokers selling both new and second-hand furniture, the larger factories producing cheaper goods and the newly emerging furnishing draper. Kirkham's analysis of the London trade showed that the development of the comprehensive firm was the main way that the furniture trade changed in order to meet the growing demand for fashionable furniture. The demise of the comprehensive firms due to increased competition from furnishing drapers was an indication that the market had changed; the middle class, in particular the lower middle class, market had increased, which required cheaper products. While Kirkham's findings were generally replicated in the circumstances of the West Midlands it was found that the furniture brokers also needed to be taken into account, although often ignored by furniture historians. The role of the brokers, in selling cheaper goods and second-hand furniture was vital for meeting the increase in demand.

Thus the furniture trade and the products it offered its customers all reflected the changing circumstances of urban living; the range of consumers who required a more diverse offering than the trade had traditionally provided, the greater spending power

of the middle class, and the changing values attached to the contents of the home, which required fashionable objects at competitive prices.

Chapter 3

The Consumers

The previous chapter looked at the trades connected with furniture provision. This chapter will deal with the consumers of furniture; people living in the West Midlands, and engaged in homemaking during the period. Since inventories are used a quantitative approach could have been adopted. This method has been used extensively on inventories for the period 1600-1730 when probate inventories were required by law in England and survive in large quantities. This approach has produced some valuable data on consumption patterns in the early modern period. However, quantitative data produces average consumption expressed in percentages and these averages can lead to stereotypical conclusions. For example, in Weatherill's Table 8.4 'Frequencies of ownership of selected goods in a sample of inventories in England, 1675-1725: selected occupations'[1] the percentages of inventories that list a selection of goods are shown for 11 different trades. These figures are revealing when the percentages involved are particularly large or small. For example, the presence of tables, in the sample of inventories, varied between 82-100%, pewter was found in 81-100%. The presence of knives and forks varied between 0-5% for the majority of trades but three trades had 15-21%. From these figures can be deduced that tables and pewter were widespread and that knives and forks were not and the three trades of shopkeepers, innkeepers and merchants were unusually well equipped for their period. More problematic are the goods where the percentages are more moderate and show less variation. Clocks, for example, were listed in 8-38% (or 16-38% without shoemakers) and pewter dishes in 41-72%. While 20-30% is a large difference it would be difficult to draw definite conclusions

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[1]Lorna Weatherill (1988), *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760*, London: Routledge.

about the relative consumption patterns of people in different trades when the individual circumstances of the consumers are not taken into account.

Quantitative methods rely on one source of information to produce data, such as inventories. This method provides a 'snap shot' of what was owned at death but can not take into account the purchasing, inheriting and disposal of objects during an individual's life. Weatherill produces a more contextualised view of consumption for three individuals for whom household accounts survive. Weatherill acknowledges that this material provides a better opportunity to get 'close to consumption, as opposed to ownership' of goods.[2] Her three examples demonstrate how expenditure on household durables varied from year to year, and reflected the individuality of the households; the size and make-up of the household, what point someone was at in their life (for example Richard Latham spent most on furniture the year he married).[3] And the individual concerns of a household that resulted in particular expenses, such as the large amount spent on letters and travelling expenses in Sarah Fell's household, due to their connections with the Society of Friends.[4]

Weatherill gives a detailed analysis of three individuals. The approach adopted here is to use qualitative methods to analyse all the consumers. This approach encourages the particular circumstances of consumption to be taken into consideration, to ascertain the meaning of homemaking practises for individuals, rather than arriving at stereotypical conclusions. As far as possible a 'more ethnographic approach'[5] was desired but there are difficulties in this approach since the period is outside living memory so the consumers can not be interviewed, as is usual in ethnographic studies.[6] The important aspect of the ethnographic approach as applied here, is to

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[2]Weatherill (1988), p. 112.
[3]Weatherill (1988), p. 120.
[4]Weatherill (1988), p. 128.
[5]Judy Attfield (1999), 'Beyond the Pale: Reviewing the Relationship between Material Culture and Design History', *Journal of Design History*, volume 12, number 4, pp. 373-380, p. 373.
[6]For many of the people dealt with only limited information is available, due partly to the dates involved preceding the 1841 Census (the first to give detailed information).

treat all the consumers as individuals using the information that is available. The desirability of such a methodology has been recognised by MacCleod in her research into patterns of consumption of fine art in the Victorian period. MacCleod warns against typecasting people according to the 'class' they appear to belong to. She stresses the need to examine individuals before drawing conclusions about the middle class as a group; out of the 146 examples that she examined many did not fit the stereotypical image.[7]

A variety of sources are used for most of the consumers studied, this produces a more rounded view than relying on inventories alone. The selection process was not straight forward since the survival of material in record offices dictates what is available from which to make a selection and the use of disparate source material could result in an uneven picture. These factors need to be taken into account but they can also be used to advantage, that is to produce a qualitative analysis of the process of consumption. Primary evidence, in the form of inventories, household and tradesmen's accounts, bills and receipts, images of interiors and surviving objects, were used to provide information on the ownership, acquisition and use of furniture and furnishings.

MacCleod states that individuals are influenced by such factors as family and education but that individuals also make choices, about what external stimuli they respond to and which they resist and this reflects 'the social group with which the individual has formed the strongest attachment.'[8] The consumers studied here were selected and analysed to identify who consumed what objects and how that might reflect the social group they identified with. For meaningful patterns to emerge, social and cultural groupings were established. The criteria for selection and the

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[7]D.S. MacCleod (1996), *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 3.
[8]MacCleod (1996), p. 7.

social and cultural groupings need to be explained before a short biographical account of the consumers can be given.[9]

The factors that were selected as having the greatest influence on consumption were location, class, differences in lived experience and gender considerations and these aspects form the basis of the remaining chapters of this work The people used as examples of consumers needed to represent sufficiently these categories. The sample consists of three members of the aristocracy, one of whom was female. Thirteen gentry were used, all of whom were male. The bulk of the sample were from the middling sort, sixty one consumers in all, of which nineteen were female. The apparent disparity in the numbers of men and women studied is due to the practise of taking inventories when a man or a widow/spinster died but not when a married woman died. Therefore in most cases the inventories of men were of households where a wife was also present. The sample includes households with families as well as those of bachelors, single women and widows. They lived throughout the West Midlands so that the link between consumers propensity to consume and their location could be examined.

The selection of people according to their social status or class requires explanation. In the Introduction it was noted that the two main ways of explaining middle class consumption is to attribute it to either emulation of the aristocracy or to a middle class culture of consumption. Whether one of these explanations can be proved, during the period and for the West Midlands, is one of the central themes for this research. The people chosen predominantly fell into the category of middling rank, with some from gentry and aristocratic backgrounds, in order that a middle class culture could be examined as distinct from more élite forms of consumption. The need to compare and contrast middling with élite consumption is necessary since

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[9]A full list of names with sources appears in Appendix 3.

much consumption theory, derived from the work of Veblen,[10] suggests that emulation is the driving force behind consumer choice. Veblenesque theories run counter to the argument of a middle class culture of consumption emerging in the early nineteenth century.

The difficulty of determining what constitutes middling rank is acknowledged and discussed by numerous writers, but an examination of these discussions reveals a changing perspective of the problem during the last twenty or so years. The earlier texts sought to distinguish, not only between sections of society, but also over time; the evolution of a class system which produced a middle class emerging in the late eighteenth century and reaching maturity in the early nineteenth century. Such an explanation of the development of a class system is derived from the ideas of Marx and has influenced the work of, for example, E. P. Thompson[11] where a Marxist derived argument is central and which focuses on clearly defined oppositional elements in society.

There are a number of reasons for not adopting this earlier methodology which views the eighteenth and nineteenth century as different due to the emergence of class. Firstly, this research is not primarily concerned with arguing for (or against) the development of a class society. And secondly, one of the aims of this research, is to produce a seamless methodology for treating consumption in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that acknowledges the gradual changes in society.

More recent texts such as Hunt and Vickery[12] take the view that while the terms might change with the term 'middle class' coming into usage, society evolved

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[10]Thorstein Veblen (1994), *Theory of the Leisure Class,* [1899], with an Introduction by Robert Lekachman, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
[11]E.P. Thompson (1963), *The Making of the English Working Class,* London: Victor Gollancz.
[12]Margaret Hunt (1996), *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England 1680-1780*, Berkeley: University of California Press; Amanda Vickery (1998), *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

gradually. This is perhaps a post-modern explanation, admitting the importance of variables such as age, gender, locality and source of income, which resulted in uneven developments. This view of social and cultural change suits the approach taken here. The sample is examined taking into account the finer gradations within middling rank, to judge the effect on the lived experience and therefore consumption patterns of individuals.[13]

By utilising the idea that society evolved gradually a broad definition of 'middling' rather than a narrow one can be adopted. Weatherill suggests that middle ranks consisted of, 'the lesser gentry, professions, merchants, shopkeepers, farmers, yeomen, husbandmen, and craftsmen.'[14] She deals with the early eighteenth century as does Earle, who makes the point that income for this strata in society might vary between £50 per annum to £10,000.[15] While Hunt suggests 'Most middling people had incomes between £50 and £2,000, and the bulk of these were concentrated within the range of £80 to £150.'[16] Income as an indicator of social status seems to have been fully acknowledged in the late seventeenth century, according to Earle, who says at that time the meaning of the term 'gentleman' had become looser so as to include anyone with sufficient income to achieve genteel lifestyle. However, as Earle also points out it was important that such a lifestyle be sustained and added to over a person's life and that rank was added to over several generations.[17]

A further definition for grading people as middling is suggested by Koditschek, that offers four simple broad categories. In his research Koditschek[18] selected bourgeois

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[13]Since the focus for study here are middling rank consumers some discussion is included on how to define the middling ranks in sociey during the period. It must be acknowledged that the aristocracy and gentry also constituted a variety of levels or factions which would have produced different consumption patterns but these are outside the remit of this research.
[14]Weatherill (1988), p. 13.
[15]Peter Earle (1989), *The Making of the English Middle Class,* London: Methuen, p. 14.
[16]Hunt (1996), p. 15.
[17]Earle (1989), pp. 9-11.
[18]T. Koditschek (1990), *Class Formation and Urban-industrial Society, Bradford, 1750-1850,* London: Cambridge University Press, p. 585.

residents in Bradford from the 1851 census where the household met at least one of the following criteria: (1) 'At least one full time coresident domestic servant'. (2) 'The households of all accredited members of the medical and legal professions and of all clergymen'. (3) 'The household head reported himself an employer of labour'. (4) 'The households of all farmers who worked at least twenty acres of land'. While Koditschek is dealing with the final years encompassed by the present study the categories are still useful for the entire period 1760-1860. However in defining category (3) Koditschek specified that in craft or retail enterprises the labour force must constitute ten or more employees and in an industrial enterprise it should be twenty or more employees, which seems rather high.

Davidoff and Hall deal with the time span 1780-1850, which is much closer to the one used in this research. They are, however, more in line with traditional views of class in the nineteenth century claiming that by the mid nineteenth century the middle class was 'welded together into a powerful unified culture'[19] and one that was an 'oppositional culture'; a bourgeois culture that distinguished itself from the aristocracy.[20] They do still provide some useful methods for categorising people. They say that while an income of as low as £50 per annum might just 'maintain any semblance of gentility', £200-£300 was a more likely requirement to 'secure a place within the middle class for an average family.'[21] Significantly Davidoff and Hall claim a change in attitude to work and methods of earning a living due to an increasing 'degradation associated with manual tasks' so that middle class respectability accompanied commercial activities that did not involve getting one's hands dirty.[22] Such a move excluded the lower end of the middling ranks itemised by Weatherill such as the smaller farmers and artisans. Davidoff and Hall claim that

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[19]Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall (1987), *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class,* London: Routledge, p. 23.
[20]Davidoff and Hall (1987), p. 21.
[21]Davidoff and Hall (1987), p. 23.
[22]Davidoff and Hall (1987), p. 22.

these moves resulted in two main divisions within the middle class; a lower and higher rank with a range of corresponding characteristics.[23]

Table 3:1 Characteristics of Higher and Lower rank middle class

Higher rank	Lower rank
Partnership or trust	Single person enterprise
Employer of work force	Use mainly family labour
Farm over 300 acres	Farm 50-300 acres
Leave property in trust for dependants at death	Leave real property at death
Invest in government securities, land or other	Invest in house and buildings
Credit from banks, long-term, regional or London	Limited credit, short-term back up from suppliers/friends
Men educated private academy, fee paid grammar school	Men educated small private day school or free grammar school
Quaker, Unitarian, Congregational or Anglican	Methodist, Baptist, Independent Anglican
Tory or Whig, depending on interest	Tory or radical or non-political
Middle-class enclave in city centre or suburb	Live in city centre
Social circle also in other towns, sometimes in London	Social circle local
Leadership in voluntary societies	Rank-and-file in voluntary societies
Wives full time at home	Wives help in enterprise or have own business/skill

These are useful categories for 'placing' people and the breadth of comments is also useful since the information about many of the people, that I am dealing with, is scanty and the kind of information varies from one person to another.

Using Weatherill and Koditschek's broad definitions of middling it was possible to select the people used in this research but with some caution with regard to the employment of labour. Having selected people as middling it was then felt desirable to utilise the subtler distinctions that Davidoff and Hall make in their lists of Higher

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[23]Davidoff and Hall (1987), Table on p. 24.

and Lower rank characteristics. While most primary material did not contain information to match people to all the criteria listed, in most cases there was sufficient to grade people with some confidence as of Higher or of Lower rank.

While concerned predominantly with the middling sort a few examples from aristocratic and gentry families are included so that middling consumption could be examined for distinct differences or similarities. Working down the social scale it is these top end families that should be considered first.

Aristocrats

This group is small since it is not the focus of the study but it contains families that demonstrate a number of facets of élite consumption. One home demonstrates the fashionable ideal of extensive orders from top London makers. By contrast is a conservative family with a keen sense of family heritage bound up in their house and estate and finally an aristocratic widow provides a gendered slant on élite homemaking.

Table 3:2 Aristocratic consumers

Name	Location	Date
Lord Bradford	Weston Park, Staffs	1805-7
Sir Herbert Perrott Pakington	Westwood House, Worcs	1786
Lady Tara	The Grange, Ellesmere	1831

In all cases the date/s refer to the main source of information regarding the homes of the consumers.

The example of an aristocratic family ordering extensive goods from London for their country house is provided by **Lord Bradford**, of Weston Park in Staffordshire.

These furniture orders[24] dating from 1805-7 were from Morel and Hughes, a top London firm and were for complete suites of furniture for a number of rooms. Although the main concern of this research is in local suppliers, Lord Bradford's orders are of interest because they demonstrate élite consumption; fashionable and best quality goods from a firm with the appropriate knowledge of furnishing designs.

Sir Herbert-Perrott Pakington, became the 7th baronet in 1762, he lived at Westwood in Worcestershire, where his family had lived since 1539.[25] Westwood was an early 17th century house which had no structural alterations made in the eighteenth century.[26] (Figure 3:1) The family were extravagant both at Westwood and their house in Bath and yet their lifestyle seems to have been old-fashioned.[27] Fanny Burney's description of a visit in 1777 adds some colour to the picture. She made a long and tedious journey with Sir Herbert, who spoke only of 'the Weather, the Hay, and Dr Dodd.'[28] An inventory made in 1786[29] reflects the family's lifestyle; old-fashioned with some concessions to current tastes.

A final aristocratic example, this time of an independent woman, is provided by **Lady Tara,** of the Grange, Ellesmere.[30] This was probably her home after being widowed, rather than the family home, since when she died, in 1831, her goods were sold up and thirteen years later a Directory recorded a different family in residence.[31] While her widowed status no doubt curtailed or limited her social and financial

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[24]See Phillis Rogers (1987), 'A Regency Interior: The Remodelling of Weston Park', Furniture History, volume 23, pp. 11-30.

[25]The Pakingtons can trace their ancestors back to the 12th century. H. and R. Pakington (1975), *The Pakingtons of Westwood,* Private Publication, p. 1.

[26]N. Pevsner (1968), *Buildings of England: Worcestershire,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 286-7.

[27]Each generation left the family fortune in a poor state. The expenditure for 1777 and 1778 was £3,745 and £4,134. Pakington (1975), p. 106.

[28]Dr Dodd had been chaplain to the king, he was convicted of forgery and executed in 1777. Pakington (1975), p.102. The highlight of the visit was a musical evening when one of the daughters sang; her voice was dreadful and her father both encouraged and made fun of her, including putting a spoon down the front of her dress while she was singing! Pakington (1975), p. 105.

[29]Inventory, WRO BA 4739 parcel 1 (viii).

[30]*Salopian Journal* 2/11/1831, house sale advertisement.

[31]In 1844 the resident of The Grange at Ellesmere was James Thomas Esq. *Directory of Shropshire* (1844), Manchester: Pigot and Slater.

position Lady Tara was still able to use her home in ways not possible for women lower down the social scale.

Gentry

When considering households below that of the aristocracy issues in categorising people arise. Earle claims that the upper and the lower cut off points for middling rank are particularly problematic to determine.[32] The fluidity of English society meant that the boundaries of 'polite society' were not rigid. For some of the people designated 'gentry' a long pedigree of land ownership is documented. Little is known of others beyond their name, title and place of residence. In all cases the title 'honourable' or 'esquire' or a Hall as the place of residence was taken as evidence of gentry status.

Table 3:3 Gentry consumers

Name	Location	Date
Charles Bowyer Adderley	Hams Hall, Warks	1837
R.B.W. Browne Esq.	Caughley Hall, Salop	1811
Hon. Evylen Dormer	Welbourne, Warks	1796
Col. Egerton	Severn Hills, Salop	1814
Edward Farmer Esq.	Caldecot Hall, Nuneaton	1770
Richard Grevis Esq.	Moseley Hall, Kings Norton	1759
Hon. & Rev. A. Grey	Hams Hall, Warks	1834
Francis Blythe Harries	Brosely Hall, Staffs	1848
Samuel Hyam Esq.	Spring Hill House, Birmingham	1849
Thomas Jesson Esq.	Charlement Hall, West Bromwich	1819
Fairfax Moresby Esq.	Stowe Hill, Lichfield	1815
James Wakeman Newport	The Manor, Hanley William, Worcs.	1785
John Staunton Esq.	Kenilworth, Warks	1811

The gentry are often characterised as traditionalists when it comes to their homes and possessions, from Mr Western in *Tom Jones* to Mr Hamley in *Wives and*

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[32]Earle (1989), p. 5.

Daughters.[33] In some cases this seems to have been true. For example **James Wakeman Newport,** the son of James Wakeman, adopted his mother's name of Newport since she was the heiress of John Newport of Hanley William.[34] He never married and lived to a great age at the manor house in Hanley William, a tiny hamlet consisting of scattered farms in the Worcestershire countryside. The inventory of his home in 1785[35] produces the impression of an old fashioned and rather 'masculine' interior which seems to reflect both his marital status and his long connection with the Worcestershire militia.

The Stauntons were an ancient family with an ancestral home at Longbridge, Warwickshire.[36] **John Staunton** provides an insight into consumption for the home as it relates to inheritance and primogeniture. He was the younger son and had not expected to inherit the family home and had become ensconced in his own house at Kenilworth. Therefore when his brother died John's son took possession of the ancestral home. An account book[37] was kept during John's second marriage and displayed many demonstrations of his generosity towards his new wife. But on his death, in 1811, the home was sold up[38] and Anne went back to her father's house. She was not able to continue as an independent woman with a home of her own due to the traditional inheritance followed by the Staunton family.

The Jesson family were also, no doubt aware of their pedigree and long traditions. They were land owners in West Bromwich 'from at least the 15th century'[39] with branches of the family in several houses in the area. From 1813 **Thomas Jesson**

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[33]Henry Fielding (1985), *Tom Jones* [1749], Harmondsworth: Penguin; Elizabeth Gaskell (1966), *Wives and Daughters* [1865], London: Dent, Everyman Library.
[34]Biographical information from VCH, *Worcestershire*, volume 4, p. 277.
[35]BRL, MSS 394886.
[36]The family had settled at Longbridge by 1450 and 'remained in direct male succession.' John Staunton was born in 1735, married his first wife in c. 1764 and his second wife, Anne Inge, by 1800, possibly as early as 1788. Family information from IGI and B. Burke (1937), *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry,* London: Henry Colburn.
[37]BRL 397971.
[38]Inventory BRL 397968.
[39]VCH, *Staffordshire*, volume 17, footnote p. 26.

Esq. owned Charlment Hall, until his death in 1819 when there was a house sale of its contents.[40] The house was described in about 1800 as ' "a lofty neat-looking house of brick, faced with stone, with iron palisades etc. in front" '.[41]

A military career was a respectable lifestyle for members of the aristocracy and gentry, particularly younger sons. **Col. Egerton**, of Severn Hills near Shrewsbury whose home was sold up on his death in 1814[42] was probably Col. Charles Bulkeley Egerton of the 54th Regiment of Foot who was by 1811 entered in the army list as being on half pay. Other Egertons recorded in the Army List may have been his father and son.[43] Col. Egerton was probably related to one of the landed gentry families of that name, either of Oulton in Staffordshire or Tatton in Cheshire.

Hams Hall, just outside Birmingham, was rented by the **Rev A. Grey** and a house sale took place in 1834 after his death.[44] (Figure 3:2) The sale was substantial and extended over four days and included farm stock. Although Hams Hall was the Adderley family home it was rented to various people for a number of years since **Charles Bowyer Adderley, Esq**. had succeeded at a young age. He had lived with his grandparents in Bristol until he came of age in 1835, at which time he travelled to Rome before taking over his estate and business interests.[45] Adderley was not just a land owner in Warwickshire and Staffordshire, he also owned mines and would therefore have had greater resources for household expenditure.[46] Adderley had a political career from 1841-1878 when he became Lord Norton. He married, in 1842,

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[40]Arris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 8/3/1819, house sale advertisement.
[41]VCH, *Staffordshire,* volume 17, p. 26.
[42]*Salopian Journal,* 24/7/1811, house sale advertisement.
[43]Col. C. B. Egerton in The Army List, 1813 and 1808, he was a Lieut. Col in 89th Regiment of Foot and in the same regiment was Captain Richard Egerton. The 1808 Army List also recorded a Major Thomas Egerton in the 29th Regiment of Foot in 1796.
[44]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 10/2/1834, house sale advertisement.
[45]W.S. Childe-Pemberton (1909), *Life of Lord Norton,* London: John Murray, pp. 11-20.
[46]This additional source of income was shared by John Staunton who leased mines with Edward Inge, the father of his second wife, in Coventry from 1789. VCH, *Warwick*, volume 8, p. 112. Adderley owned mines in Staffordshire. Childe-Pemberton (1909), p. 47.

Julia Ann Eliza, eldest daughter of Lord Leigh.[47] Details of a second sale of household goods survives for Hams Hall, which took place in 1837 which coincided with Adderley taking possession of his home, aged 23.[48]

Details about a number of gentry and their homes are derived from newspaper advertisements for house sales and while little is known of these people, beyond name and place of residence the brevity of the list focuses on the most noteworthy aspects of their residences; the items that betray their owner's social status as well as their wealth. Thus Caldecot Hall, the home of **Edward Farmer Esq.**[49] must have had heated conservatories to sustain the tea, orange and lemon trees included in his house sale in 1770. A long and detailed description of a fine carriage was included in the sale, in 1796, of the **Hon. Evylen Dormer's**[50] goods, while it was stressed that **Samuel Hyam Esq.**[51] had extensive domestic offices, flower and kitchen gardens. His house sale occurred in 1849. Elaborate language was used to extol the many qualities of the home of **Fairfax Moresby Esq.** in 1815,[52] and anyone interested could buy from the auctioneer, the full catalogue priced at two shillings, the high cost suggesting an extensive list.

Details of a number of house sales survive for members of the same family. The Benthall estate passed to Ralph Browne of Caughley Hall near Broseley, in 1746. The particulars of a house sale exist for Caughley Hall when **R.B.W. Browne Esq**., died in 1811[53] By this date Benthall Hall had passed to another branch of the family

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[47]Family details from E. Walford (1879), *The County Families of the United Kingdom,* London: Hardwicke and Bogue.
[48]Account for furniture sale, BRL Norton (2182) 820 and Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 23/10/1837, house sale advertisement. Although quite considerable the 1837 sale does not appear to be the whole household, it is possible Adderley was having a 'clear out'. After the Rev. Grey's death Hams Hall seems to have been rented by Lady Ross, who died in 1838, so the house sale may have been of her possessions. Childe-Pemberton (1909), p. 23.
[49]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 12/3/1770, house sale advertisement.
[50]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 15/2/1796, house sale advertisement.
[51]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 12/11/1849, house sale advertisement.
[52]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 13/3/1815, house sale advertisement.
[53]*Salopian Journal,* 24/7/1811, house sale advertisement.

and **Francis Blythe Harries** eventually came into the property only to sell the estate in 1844 when he became bankrupt with debts of £80,000.[54] Three years later Harries again sold up his home, this time a rented property, Broseley Hall.[55] (Figure 3:3) He then went to live in Nice where he died in 1848.[56]

The home of **Richard Grevis** is the earliest inventory to be consulted (1759)[57] and his goods and household arrangements were in keeping with this early date but there were still many luxuries and fashionable items for the time recorded. Richard Grevis was a JP and a deputy lieutenant for Worcestershire but the family prestige ended at his death since all his goods and land were sold to pay off the debts he and his wife had acquired 'leaving their son in such poverty that he was obliged to labour in a gravel pit.'[58] The position of families who appear to be firmly in the gentry, rather than middling rank, were not fixed irrevocably and over time such families might move somewhat down the social scale, into a more ambiguous position even if for only a generation or two.

Higher Rank Middling Sort

While members of the gentry might come down the social scale, members of the professions and manufacturing class could move up. Distinctions between the lesser gentry and the upper echelons of higher rank middling sort were not rigid, nor were they unambiguous. As Vickery has pointed out the business interests, social inter mingling and marriages of such families, often crossed these boundaries and blurred them.[59] Distinctions perhaps grew in importance as the effects of industrialisation

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[54]Family details from National Trust Guide for *Benthall Hall, Shropshire*, (1997), London: National Trust, pp. 22-23. Household furniture sale at Benthall Hall, SRO 6000/12839(2). Details of bankruptcy VCH, *Shropshire,* volume 4, p. 209-10.
[55]Inventory and appraisement of Broseley Hall, SRO, 6000/12839(3)
[56]Codicil to his will found amongst his papers in Nice in 1850, after his death. SRO 6000/1277.
[57]Inventory PRO, PROB 31 436/91.
[58]Malcolm Wanklyn (ed.) (1998), *Inventories of Worcestershire Landed Gentry 1537-1786,* Worcester: The Worcestershire Historical Society, p. 393.
[59]Vickery, (1998), p. 31.

and urbanisation resulted in greater numbers of people obtaining a good income from trade and manufacture. In some cases the second generation were able to move up the social scale with the purchase of country residences and land. Most of the people designated Higher rank middling sort, whether they lived in town or country, were described as Mr (rather than Esq.) in contemporary sources, indicating some social prestige. However location was an important consideration. Rural and small town society changed less dramatically than the towns affected by industrialisation and rapid urbanisation. Apart from having fewer (if any) people engaged in large scale manufacturing, rural society was also more static with a few families dominating local society. In some cases this may have discouraged mobility since small landowners had a subordinate relationship to the local large land owning family and political affiliations to them.

Table 3:4 Higher rank middling sort consumers

Name	Occupation	Location	Date
Matthew, Ann & Matthew Robinson Boulton	Manufacturers	Birmingham	1760-1840
Mr Durrell	Not known	Condover, Salop	1798
Mrs Ann Fox	Spinster	Cleobury Mortimer	1813
Thomas Francis	Bankrupt	Edgbaston, Birmingham	1849
Mr Samuel Freeth	Not known	Birmingham	1780
Rev. Mr Huntley	Minister	Shifnal,	1794
Mr Kendal	Farmer	Sedgley	1815
Mr John Loach	Not known	Edgbaston, Birmingham	1849
Miss Mayor	Spinster	Shrewsbury	1831
Mr Moore	Farmer	Hagley	1843
Mr James Mullock	Farmer	Whitchurch, Salop	1804
Mr David Parkes	School master & artist	Shrewsbury	1834
Mr Thomas Pemberton	Not known	Birmingham	1770
Mr Richard Pratchett	Retired druggist	Birmingham	1824
Dr Joseph Priestley	Unitarian minister	Birmingham	1791
Mrs Susanna Seager	Spinster	Kinver	1796
Mr James Slade	Merchant	Oswestry	1796
Mr W. Steel	Not known	Wolverley, Worcs	1830
James Watt	Manufacturer	Aston Hall, Birmingham	1820
Henry Wace	Solicitor	Shrewsbury	1860
Mrs White	Widow	Bridgnorth, Salop	1790
Alderman Whitwell	Blue merchant	Coventry	1796
Mr Charles Wyatt	Cement manufacturer	Birmingham	1794

Beginning with the urban élite examples there is **Joseph Priestley**, Unitarian minister and scientist with radical ideas, which led to his home being destroyed in the riots of 1791. An inventory was compiled of the goods[60] that had been lost in his large and comfortable home on the outskirts of Birmingham at Fair Hill. (Figure 3:4) What were his attitudes to material goods and were they reflected in his household? His appeal for damages was unsuccessful and since he had lost so much he decided to begin a new life in America and went to live in Pennsylvania in 1794.[61]

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[60]Inventory, BRL, (IIR30) 399801.
[61]Eric Delieb (1971), *The Great Silver Manufactory,* London: Studio Vista, p. 27.

Priestley was a leading member of Birmingham society, which included being a member of the Lunar Society which sometimes met at Matthew Boulton's house. **Matthew Boulton**, represents the élite of the late eighteenth century manufacturing world. Boulton was a 'self made man' and with his new money fashioned an elegant house for himself in the 1790s.[62] (Figure 3:5) Soho House was conveniently near to the Soho works but Boulton's son, **Matthew Robinson Boulton** perhaps found this less desirable than his father and so acquired an additional residence, Tew Park in Oxfordshire, thus acquiring gentry status. Bills, receipts, letters and an inventory provide extensive information about the Boultons' homemaking activities for most of the period. The Boultons provide two generations of a manufacturing family with the additional information concerning **Ann Boulton's** home of Thornhill House, which was a short distance from Soho House. (Figure 3:6) Ann had acted as housekeeper and hostess to her widowed father and continued to perform this function for her brother but when Matthew Robinson Boulton married, Ann bought her own house and led a more independent life.[63]

Several other people in the Higher rank list had close associations with Boulton. **James Watt**[64] was the son of Boulton's partner. From letters that survive it seems that he wanted to marry Ann Boulton but the marriage did not take place, possibly because Matthew Robinson Boulton did not give his approval. James Watt lived for a time at Thornhill House which he then sold to Ann Boulton in 1819 and leased the large property of Aston Hall, on the outskirts of Birmingham, which he furnished in a distinctive style in the 1820s.[65] (Figure 3:7)

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[62]Boulton acquired the lease of Soho House in 1761 and moved there in 1766. At this time the house was not complete, he made it habitable but did not carry our extensive alterations and enlargements until the 1790s. VCH, *Warwick,* volume 7, p. 50.

[63]Primary sources for the Boulton family, BRL, MBP. Only an inventory for Ann Boulton's home survives.

[64]This is James Watt Junior but he will be referred to here as James Watt and his father as James Watt Senior.

[65]Both Matthew Robinson Boulton and James Watt achieved gentry status. Rather than put them in that list they are used here and in subsequent chapters to explore notions of taste and social position

The Wyatt family were architects and artists whom Boulton employed and promoted. **Charles Wyatt** is the least well known of this talented and illustrious family. Boulton treated him like a son, taking him as an apprentice and then employing him as a clerk. Charles wanted to make enough money in order to marry his cousin Jane and so left Boulton to make his fortune in London. His plans came to nothing and he had to return to Birmingham, where Boulton took him back with a salary of £100 a year, which enabled Charles to marry Jane in 1773. Wyatt made a number of attempts to establish himself and eventually moved to London in the 1790s to manufacture building materials.[66] This move to London no doubt caused an inventory to be made of his household in St Paul's Square in 1794.[67] (Figure 3:8) It was not until the early nineteenth century that Charles Wyatt was at his most successful through the manufacture of cement.[68] Wyatt was at a somewhat precarious stage in his life when he lived in St Paul's Square but had aspirations to succeed.

Another Birmingham citizen **Richard Pratchett** lived in his own house at Summer Hill, a quiet residential area on the west side of the town. Pratchett had been a druggist and tea dealer with entries in trade directories between 1797 and 1812, with an address in the High Street in Birmingham. However by 1818 he seems to have retired since a private address, in Summer Hill, was given in the directory and his partner, Noble, continued in business in the High Street.[69] Apart from retiring to the comparative gentility of Summer Hill, Pratchett had also been able to extend his interests and no doubt increase his income, with the purchase of land at The Quarry,

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and appear alongside other members of the Boulton family for comparison. Some of Watt's furniture survives at Aston Hall plus documents, BRL, Watt Papers.

[66]J.M. Robinson (1979), *The Wyatts: an Architectural Dynasty,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 11.

[67]BRL, MS 1365. St Paul's Square was on the furthest north-east corner of Birmingham, by 1781 there were 55 houses in the square. VCH, *Warwickshire,* volume 7, p. 47.

[68]Robinson (1979), pp. 9-11.

[69]*Directory for the town of Birmingham* (1797) London: Pye; *New Triennial Directory of Birmingham* (1808) (1812), Birmingham: Thomson and Wrightson; *New Triennial Directory of Birmingham* (1818), Birmingham: Wrightson.

a 'small estate' in north Worcestershire.[70] His home was sold up in August 1824 after his death.[71] He was a religious man; surviving papers record his acquisition of '5 sittings' at St Martin's Church from Mr Thomas Carless[72] whose brother/son the Rev. Edward Carless was executor of his will.[73] Among his collection of religious, political and literary books was Hannah More's *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, which might indicate Evangelical leanings, although St. Martin's did not appoint an Evangelical minister until 1829.[74] Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* marked his death with a notice in the deaths column.[75]

A number of other Birmingham residents can be placed in the Higher rank category although virtually nothing is known of their lives and occupations. **Mr Samuel Freeth**[76] **and Mr Thomas Pemberton**[77] of Birmingham were important enough to be given the title of Mr in the late eighteenth century. **Thomas Francis**[78] **and Mr John Loach**[79] both lived in the exclusive suburb of Edgbaston, in the mid nineteenth century. They both had a phaeton in their lists of goods, and Loach also had two gigs. Francis also owned the most superior form of transport, a carriage, however, his goods were being sold because he was bankrupt.

Birmingham grew in size and importance during the period but in the mid eighteenth century Shrewsbury, as a county town and with its trading links with Wales, was an important urban centre. While decreasing in importance Shrewsbury continued to be important as an administrative and cultural centre and this was reflected in many of

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[70]BRL, MS 39/7.
[71]BRL, MS1749/1(6).
[72]BRL, MS615.
[73]BRL, MS369/10 only an extract survives, recording the executors.
[74] According to Davidoff and Hall an Evangelical minister was not appointed at St Martin's until 1829 after the death of the 'aged and inactive rector', which was presumably Rev. Carless. Davidoff and Hall (1987), p. 84.
[75]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 5/7/1824.
[76]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 3/4/1780, house sale advertisement.
[77]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 26/11/1770, house sale advertisement.
[78]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 1/10/1849, house sale advertisement.
[79]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 16/7//1849, house sale advertisement.

the residents that it attracted. **David Parkes** ran schools in Shrewsbury and was an artist and antiquarian. He specialised in scenes of architectural interest and supplied the illustrations for a number of publications such as *Antiquities of Shropshire*, 1807 and *The Beauties of England and Wales*, 1811. Parkes was also a regular contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine* who published an obituary to him after his death in late 1833.[80] David Parkes was married to the daughter of a merchant and they lived with their children (two sons worked with him as drawing masters) in Castle Street in the centre of Shrewsbury and the contents of this house were sold after his death.[81] In addition to the household effects the auctioneer conducted a separate sale of Parkes' library and antiquarian collection, the catalogue for which ran to 72 pages and the sale was spread over six days.[82]

In the mid nineteenth century Shrewsbury solicitor, **Henry Wace**, whose father and brother were also solicitors, appears to have relished his position as a member of the intellectual and professional class in a county town. This position may have influenced his homemaking strategy.[83] Wace was a member of the committee for the Shrewsbury branch of the British Archaeological Association and among his friends was the proprietress of a ladies school.[84] Wace published privately a book of his travels in Egypt, which were taken partly for 'recruiting his health, somewhat damaged by mental work', although he did not relax completely while travelling. He recorded many of the problems facing a traveller, for example: 'Saturday 3rd - Still idle, half fretting at this delay in the sailing of the steamer, only that fretting and fuming will not hasten it. How wearisome must be the life of an idle man.'[85] Henry

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[80]SRO, MS 153.
[81]Biographical details from H.R. Wilson (1978), *David Parkes,* Halesowen, W.Midlands: the author. House sale advertisement, *Salopian Journal,* 8/1/1834.
[82]SRO, D87.7.
[83]Furnishing bills for Henry Wace, BRL, MS1081/1-8.
[84]Leaflet for British Archaeological Association, SRO, Watton Cuttings, volume 8, p. 175 and details from 1861 Census.
[85]Henry Wace (1865), *Palm Leaves from the Nile*, Shrewsbury: 'printed for private circulation only', pp. 7 and 49.

Wace clearly saw himself as a man who worked for his living but also implied that his work was useful and had moral worth.

Miss Mayor, whose home in Meole Brace, on the outskirts of Shrewsbury, was sold up after her death in 1831,[86] was probably related to the Rev. Mr Mayor, Vicar of Shrewsbury, possibly his daughter. While Miss Mayor's status is somewhat in doubt she is included to represent the many independent women who chose to live in Shrewsbury in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.[87]

The Coventry merchant **Alderman Whitwell,** and the succeeding generations of his family were prominent members of society. Textiles were an important industry in Coventry and as a blue merchant Whitwell had built up his fortune at the heart of the trade. He was also a prominent figure in local government and his sons continued in his foot steps; two sons were aldermen and another became mayor of Coventry in the early nineteenth century.[88] This was clearly a family of some importance in Coventry society and their home, at the time of Whitwell's death in 1796, can be seen as a reflection of their wealth and position.[89]

James Slade was another merchant. His home in Oswestry was sold up at his death in 1796 and advertised in the *Salopian Journal*.[90]

An example of a farming family, is provided by **James Mullock** of Whitchurch who died in 1804. The family had lived there for some years,[91] and had land in Whitchurch and Dodington. From his will and other papers James Mullock appears

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[86]*Salopian Journal,* 20/12/1831, house sale advertisement.
[87]Mark Girouard (1990), *The English Town,* New Haven and London: Yale, p. 113.
[88]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 18/9/1815 and 24/1/1831.
[89]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 28/3/1796, house sale advertisement.
[90]*Salopian Journal* 23/3/1796, house sale advertisement.
[91]Family papers include legal documents referring to Thomas Mullock of Whitchurch, butcher, in 1744. SRO, 6000/12165.

to have been a bachelor and this was perhaps reflected in his somewhat haphazard household arrangements.[92]

A number of the names in the Higher rank list appear to be have been farmers from the list of goods in their house sales, in the early to mid nineteenth century. **Mr Moore,**[93] **Mr Kendal**[94] **and Mr Steel**[95] come into this category; the use of the title Mr and the emphasis given to their effects suggests they were substantial enough to be considered Higher rather than Lower rank.

Ann Fox of Cleobury Mortimer, left mostly money in legacies in 1813 but also some to buy land to fund a charity for the poor of the parish. Her house had extensive gardens for vegetables and cows and pigs with fields for pasture and hay.[96] Another spinster who used some of her money for good causes was **Susanna Seager** whose home was sold up after her death in 1796.[97] Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* in a lengthy obituary, recorded that her death was 'much regretted' and that her 'benevolence was active and exemplary when alive and it will be found to extend beyond the grave, by her liberal bequests to various public charities in the neighbourhood.'[98] A third independent woman **Mrs White**, the widow of an attorney, was of Higher rank status. She had a substantial home in Bridgnorth, which was sold up on her death in 1790.[99]

Lower Rank Middling Sort

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[92]Inventory, SRO, 6000/12167.
[93]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 6/3/1843, house sale advertisement.
[94]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 6/2/1815, house sale advertisement.
[95]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 16//8/1830, house sale advertisement.
[96]SRO, 6000/15309, auctioneer's catalogue. SRO, 6000/15317, extracts from will.
[97]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 15/2/1796, house sale advertisement.
[98]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 1/2/1796.
[99]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 18/10/1790, house sale advertisement and SRO, St. Leonard, Bridgnorth, parish records.

Table 3:5 Lower rank middling sort consumers

Name	Occupation	Location	Date
Jonah Bissell	Metal wares manufacturer	Birmingham	1842
Catherine Brown	widow	Bridgnorth	1774
Jane Browne	Plumber & glazier	Bridgnorth	1797
Ann Chandler	Widow	Shrewsbury	1814
Samuel Cracknell	Buckle maker	Birmingham	1794
John Crane	Victualler	Birmingham	1772
Ann Devey	Widow	Bridgnorth	1767
Mr Dorsett	Inn keeper	Darlaston	1815
Richard Evason	Farmer	Cardington	1777
James Eyken	Upholsterer	Wolverhampton	1780
Elizabeth Foxall	Widow	Bridgnorth	1766
Edward Haines	Inn keeper	Bridgnorth	1794
Thomas Heeley	Toy maker	Birmingham	1764
Margaret Higginson	Widow	Bridgnorth	1762
Mr Avery Homer	Tanner	Birmingham	1834
Mr Joseph Hunt	Gunsmith	Birmingham	1770
Elizabeth Jeffries	Widow	Bridgnorth	1768
Mary Lacon	Widow	Bridgnorth	1763
Margaret Lamb	Widow	Bridgnorth	1767
Francis Law	Bucher	Bridgnorth	1761
Thomas Lovatt	Farmer	Claverley	1786
John & Susanna Marrian	Farmers	Bobbington	1761-70
Mr Moore	Farmer	Hagley	1843
Elizabeth Mugg	Widow	Bridgnorth	1760
Mr Edward Pearce	Baker	Bridgnorth	1810
Richard Price	Miller	Allum Bridge	1802
Catherine & Hannah Poyner	Spinsters	Bridgnorth	1765
Ann Rowley	Spinster	Bridgnorth	1762
Mary Rowley	Widow	Claverley	1762
Thomas Shelley	Grocer	Stone	1790
Solman Smith	Carpenter	Birmingham	1764
Thomas Thomas	Farmer	Bobbington	1796
Mr Ward	Machinist	Birmingham	1853
Edward Whitaker	Inn keeper	Bridgnorth	1798
Humphrey Wyrley	Plater	Birmingham	1770

The people designated Lower rank middling sort were all artisans, tradesmen and smaller tenant farmers, or the wives and daughters of them. They all lived and worked at the same premises and the artisans and tradesmen were all situated in town centres. Only a few were given the title Mr and their details came from newspaper advertisements, mostly from the later period, when the title had gained more general use. At the outset of the period the categories given by Weatherill place all these people in the middling sort but as the period progressed, some people with these occupations and characteristics, were perilously close to the labouring classes and some may well have slipped down the social scale, due to a down turn in trade or through illness. One person in this list was bankrupt and the proceeds of the house sales of several others were to go to their creditors. Most of them were unable to divorce their work and domestic life completely. Achieving respectability in their home life was thus made more difficult and preoccupations of this kind became increasingly important during the period 1760-1860.

Most of the people in this category have come to light because an inventory of their goods survives, due to the practice of continuing to take probate inventories in some districts, long after the practice had ceased elsewhere. These inventories mostly date from 1760 to the 1790s and most are for Bridgnorth and Birmingham residents. To overcome the paucity of inventories for other places inventories have been supplemented with newspaper advertisements for house sales and in a few cases with the catalogues printed by auctioneers for house sales, so that the whole period and other locations are covered. Most of these people were not important or wealthy enough to have been involved in the social activities in a community for which records have survived. Although little is known of some of these individuals the inventories do give valuable information; name, occupation, place of residence, a list of household goods and lists of trade tools and materials or farm implements and livestock. The last point often gives a good indication of the scope of the business as well as how it affected the organisation of the household. In addition some wills or

other legal documents survive, concerned with the disposal of goods and these documents usually include references to family members.

To consider the representatives of Lower rank in more detail the sample can be broken down into sections according to place of residence and type of occupation, beginning with the artisans and tradesmen of Birmingham. This group display varying degrees of success in their trades but even the most successful still lived and worked at the same premises, rather than moving to the outskirts of the town. **Thomas Heeley**,[100] toy and button maker and **Jonah Bissell**,[101] metal wares manufacturer were both bachelors, or widowers without children. In 1764 Thomas Heeley's goods were valued at £639 8s 5d, this sum included the stock and materials of his button and toy making, debts he was owed, also a grocery business which seems to have been run by his unmarried sister, Ann, who lived with him. Heeley left most of his possessions to Ann plus a moiety to his mother and a married sister. Despite his assets Heeley's household goods only amounted to £34 4s. A similar picture emerges from the example of Jonah Bissell. His will left £600 in bequests to family and friends, including his clerk who lived at the same address. The auction catalogue for the sale of his goods in 1842 was extensive but most of the list was for his business effects. Both men's work spilled over into their living accommodation but, perhaps due to the later date, Bissell's inventory displayed greater comforts and cultural aspirations than Heeley's.

Samuel Cracknell (d. 1794), buckle and sugar tong maker, may also have been a bachelor; administration was granted to his father, indicating perhaps that he did not leave a widow, and while his inventory seems to have been for a complete house the list is not by room since some goods had already been sold. **Soloman Smith** (d. 1764), carpenter, left a wife, 3 sons and a married daughter, to inherit his goods

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[100]For all individuals in this section there are probate inventories at LRO, for some there are also wills and administration. Other sources will be noted.
[101]BRL, MS 319/4, catalogue of house sale.

which included an additional house which was rented to tenants. **Mr Joseph Hunt**[102] gunsmith, and **Mr Ward**,[103] machinist both sold up their households, in 1770 and 1851, because, as the advertisements claimed, they were 'going to reside in London' or 'leaving Birmingham'. Neither included tools in the sale so they perhaps intended to seek their fortune elsewhere. A definite picture of failure comes from the inventory of **Humphrey Wyrley** (d. 1770), plater. His wife was executor and she was left with very little; some goods had already been sold to pay off debts and others had been seized by a creditor. **Mr Avery Homer**,[104] worked as a tanner, on the outskirts of Birmingham at the Balsall Heath Tannery and the advertisement of his goods included a rick of hay. Homer's house sale in 1834, claimed he was retiring and 'declining housekeeping' which perhaps indicates he was going to live in lodgings or with another family member. Smaller Birmingham retailers are represented by **John Crane,** victualler. His inventory, made in 1772, was for household goods and brewing utensils and he and his wife seem to have kept a small ale house; the parlour included a 'Drinking Table' and 8 chairs.

Another dynamic town in this research, Wolverhampton, provides an example of a flourishing artisan, **James Eyken** (d. 1780),[105] cabinet maker and upholsterer. Not surprisingly he had a great quantity of good quality home furnishings and yet his Lower rank status is revealed through certain limitations in his household arrangements and the close proximity between his home life and business activities.

The Lower rank list includes a number of residents of the smaller town of Bridgnorth. Some appear to have been successful in their enterprises. **Jane Browne** (d. 1797), plumber and glazier, had carried on in business after her husband had died and her four sons and daughter probably contributed, since the great number of bed

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[102]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 18/6/1770, house sale advertisement.
[103]BRL, MS 690/21, auctioneer's advertisement for house sale.
[104]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 10/2/1834, house sale advertisement.
[105]PRO, PROB 31/678/155, probate inventory.

chambers suggest that they continued to live at home. The family's position can also be gauged by her husband having been a church warden.[106] As with the Birmingham and Wolverhampton tradesmen, there was a close proximity between living and working premises in the Lower rank of Bridgnorth. The inventory, of 1761, of **Francis Law,** butcher, included animals worth £99. His eldest daughter, a spinster inherited his goods. **Edward Pearce**[107] was carrying on his father's business as a baker, the advertisement for his goods, in 1810, included his bakehouse. Pearce had been successful in Bridgnorth; he was a burgess and his business was situated in the High Street, the most prominent street in the town.

Hannah and Catherine Poyner experienced some varied fortunes in their lives in Bridgnorth. Their father had been a timber merchant and had been a burgess and church warden in the town in the early eighteenth century. The family had some importance in the town probably placing them amongst the élite of Bridgnorth tradesmen, however their brother, John, ran up debts and on their deaths, in quick succession, in 1765, their goods were to be sold for the benefit of his creditors.[108]

Three sets of information are included for inns. Two probate inventories exist for owners of the Fox Inn, in Low Town, Bridgnorth; **Edward Haines** in 1794 and **Edward Whitaker,** in 1798. Inns generally had a higher level of household goods than ordinary homes but there is a marked increase in the valuation of the Fox Inn between the deaths of the two inn keepers; £143 in 1794 and £261 in 1798. The third inn was kept by **Mr Dorsett**[109] at Darlaston in Shropshire. Mr Dorsett's business, in 1815, seems to have been quite varied; apart from brewing his own beer he was engaged in farming and also sold grocery and drapery goods.

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[106]SRO, St. Leonard, Bridgnorth, parish records.
[107]The auctioneer's advertisement is in a bound volume of pedigrees, a pedigree being written on the reverse. SRO Hardwick Pedigrees, 6001/4. and SRO, St. Leonard, Bridgnorth, parish records.
[108]Poyner family details from SRO, St Leonard, Bridgnorth, parish records.
[109]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 9/1/1815, house sale advertisement.

The small market town of Stone declined in importance but during the later eighteenth century, at the time of grocer, **Mr Thomas Shelley's**[110] residence it had a short revival of fortunes due to the building of the canal. The advertisement for Shelley's household goods also included his stock and shop fittings.

A number of tenant farmers are included in the list of Lower rank consumers. The Shropshire miller **Richard Price (d. 1802)**, appears to have been a bachelor or widower but he had a housekeeper to look after his comfortable home. The two inventories for the **Marrian** family, made firstly on the death of **John** in 1761 and then nine years later for his wife, **Susanna**, show a well organised farm house with a few modernisations having taken place between the two deaths. **Thomas Lovatt's** inventory makes use of the title 'yeoman' although by 1786 the meaning of the term was imprecise. Lovatt's spinster sister lived with him (no wife and children are mentioned) and a married sister was his administrator. The farmer **Thomas Thomas** made his will in 1796, just before his death in which he left £100 to his sister 'for her own proper use and benefits independent of her said husband' and the residue to 'Ann Beddard who now lives with me' along with the request that 'Mrs Frances Luker who is my present landlady...of the farm I now occupy at the time of my Decease will agree to take the said Ann Beddard for a Tenant to the said Farm'. Whether Ann Beddard was able to continue at the farm in Bobbington is not known. **Richard Evason's** inventory for his home and small holding was made in 1777, not on his death but because he was bankrupt.[111]

Independent Women

The rest of the people designated Lower rank are independent women; ten widows and one spinster. Women at this period often depended on the men in their lives for

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[110]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 8/3/1790, house sale advertisement.
[111]SRO, 6000/17750.

their status thus it is their marital status alone that is recorded on their inventories. It can perhaps be assumed that they did not have substantial business interests such as Jane Browne's or it would have been mentioned. They were probably not from families with much social standing as their names do not appear in any surviving records as do Hannah and Catherine Poyner's. They all lived in Bridgnorth with the exception of Mary Rowley and Ann Chandler and are placed in chronological order with any information available:

Elizabeth Mugg (d. 1760), a widow, her will names two married daughters and a son, aged under 20.

Mary Rowley (d. 1762) was a widow who lived in Claverley, Shropshire. Her family appear to have been involved in farming. She had one married daughter and six sons (one married).

Margaret Higginson (d. 1762), a widow, with a son who was named in her will.

Ann Rowley (d. 1762) a spinster, in her will she left a pew to Richard Lowe a butcher, plus other bequests. Her inventory records that £33 of her money was 'in the hands of Mr Wilde of Ludlow'.

Mary Lacon (d. 1763), a widow, was a barge owner which meant that she participated in the trade on the River Severn, the principal occupation in Bridgnorth in the eighteenth century. Her son inherited her two barges.

Elizabeth Foxall (d. 1766), was a widow, her inventory only listed kitchen and bed chamber goods plus '2 small leasehold tenements' worth £10. Her son was a farmer and possibly she lived with him or in lodgings.

Margaret Lamb (d. 1767), a widow, one of her daughters was married to a waterman, and another to a school master.

Ann Devey (d. 1767), was a widow and no mention is made of any relatives, all her goods were to go to her 'principal creditors', a cheesefactor and a grocer.

Elizabeth Jeffries (d. 1768), a widow, does not seem to have had any children, instead her three brothers and various nieces and nephews were beneficiaries in her will, which included her pew in the Gallery of St Mary Magdalen and items of silver and china, plus a silk and wool gown amongst other clothing.

Catherine Brown, (d. 1774), a widow, with two sons and two daughters (one married) who were named in her will, her nephew was to act as executor.

Ann Chandler, (d. 1814) a widow living in Shrewsbury. Her daughter, named in her will, was married to a shoemaker and lived in Kent. One of Ann Chandler's rooms was occupied by a lodger.

It is difficult to place these women along side the other Lower rank middling sort with any accuracy. The incomplete nature of some of these homes, as indicated in the inventories, makes these some of the poorest homes considered although some of these women may have lived with relatives or were lodgers in other people's houses. It would be misleading to place details from these inventories with others in the Tables in Chapter 5, on Social Status, instead this material, supplemented by the inventories for women about whom a little more is known, will be dealt with separately in Chapter 6, on Lived Experience. This will enable the material culture of independent women to be assessed, taking into account the changing fortunes encountered during their lives as well as the changes that occurred across the period.

Conclusion

The people featured in this chapter provide examples of consumers of furniture and furnishings in the West Midlands during the period. These individuals will be dealt with in detail using qualitative analysis rather than reducing them to average percentages, as in quantitative data. The sample, while not extensive, provides a sufficient number of examples to represent the categories identified as important for considering consumption for the home; location, social status, lived experience and gender. These consumers therefore provide the opportunity to observe consumption patterns developing and to analyse those patterns according to the circumstances of the individuals concerned.

SECTION 2

Location and Social Status as Factors Influencing Patterns of Consumption

Chapter 4

Location and Consumption

An examination of where people lived as an influence on both their taste in household furnishings and on their propensity to consume such goods has been prompted by Lorna Weatherill's research into consumption in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.[1] Weatherill observed that 'towns have often been seen as a vital force in breaking down "traditional" patterns of behaviour and consumption and as the places in which new ideas and new ways of life are first introduced.'[2] This general opinion was borne out in Weatherill's research in which she found that the people who consumed most and who chose to purchase the new consumer goods were those who lived in towns and who were merchants and tradespeople. Estabrook came to similar conclusions when he compared consumption patterns in Bristol and rural Somerset. He states that:

> Material culture must be discussed with reference to wealth, occupations, and gender awareness, but the strongest factors guiding the ownership of possessions and the uses of dwelling space were the urbane and rustic attitudes associated with topographical settings.[3]

If Estabrook and Weatherill's findings are correct this suggests that people in towns used the home and consumption for it differently from people in smaller urban developments and from those in rural areas. Perhaps the home was being used as a projection of personal identity through a process that operated differently in urban life. The present research project is for a later period than either Estabrook or

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[1]Lorna Weatherill (1988), *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture, 1660-1760*, London: Routledge and (1993) 'The meaning of consumer behaviour in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England' in J. Brewer, & R. Porter, (eds) *Consumption and the World of Goods in the Eighteenth-Century,* London: Routledge.
[2]Weatherill (1988), p. 72, see also (1993) table 10.2, p. 219.
[3]Carl B. Estabrook (1998), *Urbane and Rustic England: Cultural Ties and Social Spheres in the Provinces 1660-1780,* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Weatherill and therefore a somewhat different urban environment existed. During the period 1760-1860 urbanisation occurred at a rapid rate for some towns and their character changed considerably. Two questions must be asked; firstly whether urban living directly influenced people's propensity to consume and secondly whether the differences between towns and between town and rural living continued to influence people's consumption habits into the 'modern' period. Later in this chapter, examples will be given of consumers, engaged in homemaking, from Birmingham, Shrewsbury, Stone and Longton in the Potteries.

Weatherill does not attempt to explain the phenomenon outlined above. At the time she was writing little work had been done on urban history.[4] The two principal works being Chalklin and Corfield.[5] The last ten years have seen published a body of work exploring this field, although the precise role of consumerism as linked to urban life has still to be fully addressed.

The Urban Hierarchy

One of the overriding ways of interpreting the character of urban development has been the notion of an urban hierarchy. Borsay clearly delineates this in his introduction to *The English Urban Renaissance,* where he stresses the; 'importance of defining towns qualitatively rather than quantitatively'.[6] Borsay's method results in tiers of towns with smaller commercial towns at the bottom followed by larger commercial towns each with a corresponding sphere of influence. These towns depended on their markets and needed to be close to good roads or navigable rivers to sustain their position; the larger had 'at least a few sophisticated trades and

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[4]P. Borsay (ed.) (1990), *The Eighteenth Century Town 1688-1820*, London: Longman, p. 1.
[5]C.W. Chalklin (1974), *The Provincial Towns of Georgian England: a study of the building process, 1740-1820,* London: Edward Arnold: Penelope Corfield (1982), *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[6]P. Borsay (1989), *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 4.

services.'[7] The urban hierarchy is evident in Chalklin's work. Speaking of the period prior to 1700 Chalklin has observed that towns grew as administrative centres but also to service 'the need of the growing middle class and leisured people', this included 'specialised shops, professional services, entertainment and suitable residences'. In addition regional specialisations in industry also stimulated towns to grow 'as locations and as service centres for manufacture'.[8]

Chalklin stresses a proto-industrial style of development for towns with the ingredients already in place and which became more pronounced during the classic period of industrialisation.[9] The towns that had important administrative roles were regional centres 'whose prosperity rested upon a wide range of functions. All were major trading centres with markets and shops that spilled out over a wide area of their street scape [and they] dominated a huge hinterland.[10] Chalklin suggests that due to one town in an area thriving in this way worked as a disincentive for other towns in the area to grow, in both population but also in urban facilities.[11] Research on the regional centre being studied here by Cox found that the dominance of Shrewsbury apparently hindered the development of towns within a ten mile radius.[12] Part of the second tier were larger ports and centres of industry for a region. The latter, of which Birmingham was one; 'were among the most dynamic towns during the period [1660-1770].'[13] The top tier was London.

According to the notion of the urban hierarchy then, the towns studied in this research would have Shrewsbury at the top as a regional centre but with Birmingham

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[7]Borsay (1989), p. 6.
[8]Chalklin (1974), pp. 16-17.
[9]This is a view common to many urban historians, with a gradual evolution also being the message from Clarke et al.P. Clark (ed.) (1984), *The Transformation of English Towns 1600-1800*, London: Hutchinson.
[10]Borsay (1989), p. 9.
[11]Chalklin (1974), p. 11.
[12]Nancy Cox (1993), 'The Distribution of Retailing Tradesmen in North Shropshire, 1660-1750', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, volume 13, number 1, pp. 4-22, p. 15.
[13]Borsay (1989), p. 10.

beginning to overtake it as a dynamic industrial centre just at the outset of the period. Wolverhampton was also fast growing in the same way but not sufficiently to out strip Birmingham. Stone and Bridgnorth were both old market towns, the former on an important road link and the latter on the Severn, but both towns were receding in importance during the period. While Longton, only a small market town at the outset, grew in importance and assumed a stronger urban presence. Borsay warns that the hierarchy should not be seen as rigid but constantly changing and this would account for the difficulty of placing these six towns precisely within the urban hierarchy.[14]

Borsay goes further in problematizing the notion of a hierarchy in a more recent collection of essays, *The Eighteenth Century Town 1688-1820.* Rather than the perfect pyramid (albeit with shifting components within it) the model suggested is top and bottom heavy; London being huge and a great many small towns that were none-the-less urban in character. During the eighteenth century Borsay suggests the middle filled out while some of the smaller towns 'with good external communications prospered at the expense of the more marginal and isolated towns.'[15] Thus a far messier picture emerges. It is clear however, that not only individual towns but the relationship between towns over long periods need to be studied to take these ideas further.

The present work, in dealing with the link between urban development and consumer activity, can only go a small way towards expanding these ideas; first by considering availability of goods in a few towns in the West Midlands and secondly by exploring to what extent the spread of ideas about goods changed during the period. Thirdly, a few examples of West Midlands consumers will be considered, to explore whether

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[14]Borsay (1989), p. 10.
[15]Borsay (1990), p. 6.

differing degrees of inclination to purchase goods is apparent, according to the location of the consumers and whether this inclination changed over time.

Availability of Goods

Access to goods will first be examined by reconsidering some of the Tables used in Chapter 2 with a focus on the match between the nature of furniture provision with the towns in question. A more detailed look at access can then be undertaken by looking at what tradesmen kept in stock. Limited knowledge of this is available through the advertisements for cabinet makers and upholsterers selling up their goods upon retiring from business or through inventories of stock at death.

The towns being dealt with are stratified in terms of population and industrial development, they are of differing importance in matters of administration, and most importantly, they offered differing levels of commercial activity. If it were simply a matter of size then there would be a correlation between the size of town and population with the degree of provision and consumption for the home. (See Table 2:1) However it would appear that this relationship between town and consumption was more complex.

Tables 2:2-2:7 cover the period 1760-1860. Taking the earlier period first, up to 1820, we can summarise provision. A clear hierarchy can be detected, that corresponds to Borsay's revised model. Only Birmingham and Shrewsbury began the period with cabinet makers and upholsterers.[16] Birmingham was best represented both in numbers of traders and with a good representation of specialist trades. Shrewsbury was next as a regional centre in terms of specialist trades. In addition both Birmingham and Shrewsbury were most prominent in having traders in business

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[16]This does not mean that none existed. For example Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* carried an advertisement for a Bridgnorth cabinet maker in 1743 (10/10/1743) and later in this chapter an inventory, of 1780, will be used for a Wolverhampton upholsterer.

for long periods, of twenty or more years, perhaps indicating that a good level of demand existed, even through slump periods. By contrast the small market towns were poorly represented; Stone perhaps depended more than Bridgnorth, on larger neighbours, possibly suggesting Bridgnorth continued to have a stronger urban presence either due to its trade on the Severn or the continuation of rural patronage.[17] The figures for the towns that were harder to place in the hierarchy, Wolverhampton and the Potteries, suggest that Wolverhampton had a head start on the Potteries being an important market town during the eighteenth century, as well as gaining in importance as an industrial manufacturing town. It is not therefore surprising to find Wolverhampton better represented in the specialist trades than the Potteries, since the towns making up the Potteries were expanding in the late eighteenth century but took off in the early to mid nineteenth century. However, Wolverhampton was less well represented than Shrewsbury in the early period. Numbers suggest less activity, fewer specialist trades and tradespeople were not in business for such long periods, perhaps indicating a more volatile market affected by slump periods.

We can see a hierarchy in place up to 1820 but when we consider the numbers and distribution of trades at the close of the period these distinctions are less clear. All have 'generalist' cabinet makers and upholsterers by the end of the period, with the exception of Stone. In the case of furniture brokers, this was the fastest expanding area for Birmingham, and Wolverhampton had far more than Shrewsbury although with only a slightly larger population. Presumably this indicates more trade in Birmingham and Wolverhampton in second hand and cheaper wares. The mystery is the lack of furniture brokers for the Potteries. The explanation could be one of several things; that furniture brokers had market stalls rather than permanent shops[18]

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[17]Trinder and Cox claim that due to their travelling the bargemen along the Severn 'obviously acquired a taste for novelties which they conveyed back to their native places.' Barrie Trinder and Nancy Cox (eds) (2000), *Miners and Mariners of the Severn Gorge: Probate Inventories for Benthall, Brosely, Little Wenlock and Madeley 1660-1764,* Chichester: Phillimore, p. 28.

[18]David Alexander (1970), *Retailing in England during the Industrial Revolution,* London: University of Lonon, Athlone Press, p. 42.

or that they were too down market to gain an entry or that the compiler of the directory used the blanket term 'cabinet maker and upholsterer' for any kind of furniture maker or seller. The last suggestion would also explain the lack of separate upholsterers.

The specialist trade of Carvers and Gilders which was only found in Birmingham and Shrewsbury at the beginning of the period, was well represented in Wolverhampton and had some representation in the Potteries by the later period. There is probably a link here with changing trade practice. The new method, of gilding moulded decoration, was a quicker and easier process and was suited to the later period when carved and gilded mirror and picture frames were highly fashionable and a large number were produced. Therefore the better representation of this trade by the end of the period shows a catching up of all areas with fashionable goods but not of a greater proliferation of élite goods.

The existence of tradespeople does not say much about what was stocked; the quality, variety and fashionability of what was available and whether these conditions existed throughout the period. This information is difficult to judge from existing evidence but some idea can be gleaned from newspaper advertisements for cabinet makers and upholsterers, auctioneers, paper hangers etc.[19] Inventories give a more detailed account of stock but are even more difficult to come by. Using these sources produces an approximate picture of the furnishings that were available.

In Birmingham, Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton good quality and fashionability is suggested by various newspaper advertisements and one cabinet maker and

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[19]A thorough and systematic search of Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* was not possible due to the poor condition of the originals and the variable quality of the microfilm record and so a selection was gathered between 1750-1850 . However the *Salopian Journal* (published from 1794) is in good condition and the advertisements have been catalogued therefore a comprehensive search was made between 1794-1840.

upholsterer's inventory. For example as early as 1750 Richard Shelly in Park Street, Birmingham advertised that he had a:

> Great Variety of Cabinet Goods, particularly Chests of Drawers, both Wallnut and Mahogany, Writing Desks, Buroe Tables, four Draw'd and Three Draw'd Tables, Mahogany and Wainscot, and Mahogany Claw'd Tables of all sizes.....[20]

Not only walnut, the fashionable wood of the early eighteenth century but also mahogany[21] had found its way to Birmingham. Likewise, Birmingham provided other furnishings to a high standard at an early date. For example, in 1770 Messrs Watson and Kindon advertised that they were opening; 'a warehouse at No 76 near the Castle in the High Street Birmingham, for all Sorts of Papier Machee, Ornaments and Paper Hangings, from their original Manufactory in Long-Acre, London'.[22] Carpets also seem to have been in plentiful supply helped by the close proximity to Kidderminster, a centre of manufacture; in 1780 for example a sale of carpets was 'sold by the Manufacturer from Kidderminster' at the Chain Inn in Bull Street.[23] Another furnishing commodity that was advertised and which always stressed its fashionable nature was wall paper; John Rodderick claimed to have 'the largest [stock] out of the Metropolis' and reinforced the claim by calling his shop, which was in New Street, Birmingham, the London Paperhanging Warehouse.[24]

Newspaper advertisements for tradespeople in Shrewsbury also suggest a high level of fashionable goods. Although none were found for the earliest part of the period (the *Salopian Journal* began publication in 1794) still early representation is suggested by the sale of 'part of the Stock in Trade of the late Mr Leake, Cabinet

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[20]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 23/7/1750.
[21]The source of timber in the West Midlands is not known. While the area was inland it presumably did not have a problem with the supply of materials whether for furniture making or the manufacture of other goods. Mahogany was imported into Britain more extensively after The Naval Stores Act of 1721. Adam Bowett (1994), 'The Commercial Introduction of Mahogany and the Naval Stores Act of 1721', *Furniture History*, volume 30, pp. 43-56, p. 51.
[22]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 25/6/1770.
[23]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 1/5/1780.
[24]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 15/6/1835

Maker, Wyle Cop' in 1798.[25] The Leake family were in business in Wyle Cop at least as early as 1786[26] and a high standard is indicated by the 1798 sale which included: 'Several Sets of Mahogany Chairs, Secretaires and Bureaus, Dining, Pembroke and Card Tables; Night Tables, Chests of Drawers, Bason Stands, a very handsome Mahogany Wardrobe Bed, compleat'. An even more comprehensive stock is suggested by the auction of the stock of 'the late John Durnford Upholsterer and Cabinet Maker' in 1836. The long list includes:

> two sets of sliding mahogany dining tables, three sets of mahogany dining parlour chairs, 2 elegant circular Rosewood loo tables, pair of beautiful Rosewood swing top card tables, 12 highly finished costly Zebra Drawing Room Chairs, French Stuff seats covered with blue damask.....[27]

The presence of expensive and fashionable materials is noteworthy. Representation of Carvers and Gilders in Shrewsbury has already been mentioned with reference to the firm of Donaldson, others included, in 1831, E. Davies who advertised that he had taken over from:

> the late Wm Lewis [and sold goods] *personally* selected from the first Houses in London .....an extensive Variety of the newest Ornament Patterns and Mouldings for Glass and Picture Frames; also an Assortment of the finest Fancy Woods now used in the manufacture of Frames.[28]

The availability of goods in Wolverhampton can be demonstrated through the inventory of James Eykyn, cabinet maker and upholsterer, made on his death in 1780.[29] This was an extensive business, worth a total of £1132 10s 3d. The inventory lists large quantities of materials, textiles and trimmings, timber, wallpaper, Dutch tiles etc. There were also numerous finished and unfinished articles of furniture, in the shop and stored in other parts of his home. The inventory

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[25]*Salopian Journal*, 28/2/1798.
[26]G. Beard and C. Gilbert (eds) (1986), *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers 1660-1840*, Leeds: Furniture History Society and W.S. Maney and Sons Ltd.
[27]*Salopian Journal*, 4/5/1836.
[28]*Salopian Journal,* 1/6/1831.
[29]PRO, XC4409 CL, PROB 31/678/155.

suggests a firm that was in business for many years, which had accumulated much in the way of raw materials. It was also a business with a large and diverse range of customers judging from the list of creditors.[30] Quantities of mahogany furniture, gilded furniture and mirrors suggest high quality work being done by this Wolverhampton craftsman. Eyken even had a silvering room (for making his own mirrors) itemised.

Representation of fashionable goods in quality materials for the whole period in Birmingham and for most of the period in Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton, is demonstrated by the preceding examples. The increased awareness of what was fashionable and what needed to be promoted is perhaps also in evidence in the language used. However the availability of these goods may only have been transient in many cases. Most of the advertisements were for auction sales, whether of new or second hand goods, some were for cabinet makers who were going out of business and some were for travelling salesmen. One example of this was a notice that began 'Just arrived from ABROAD - To be sold, by Mr Campione, Italian'.[31] A list of paintings and ornaments followed and ended with the words 'His stay in town will be short'. The Italian and French goods would have been fashionable and desirable but perhaps Birmingham could not sustain many such tradespeople full time in the 1770s. These kind of advertisements seem to decrease going into the nineteenth century, which might suggest that a more regular demand needed to be met, or that itinerant methods of selling were less acceptable.

Many of the newspaper advertisements also suggest a mixed quality being on offer. The early period had examples of curious methods of retailing, such as in 1750 the sale by ticket:

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[30]Diane Collins (1993), 'Primitive or Not? Fixed-shop Retailing Before the Industrial Revolution', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies,* volume 3, number 1, pp. 23-35, p. 29.
[31]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 20/8/1770

> of a Parcel of Goods of the value of Two Hundred and Twenty-Four Pounds, consisting of Plate, Clocks, Watches, Gold Rings, fine looking Glasses, Italian Marble Chimney pieces, japann'd Tea-tables and Waiters.....[various fabrics are listed ending with] Linnen Handkerchiefs, Stockings and Mahogany Tables.[32]

Tickets cost 5s but what purchasers received seems rather hit and miss.

Advertisements for this form of retailing seem to disappear as the period progressed.

Rather more limited access in smaller towns is indicated by the advertisements appearing in Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* and the *Salopian Journal*. Few small town furnishing tradespeople chose to use this facility, perhaps indicating that few existed; one example was an Ironbridge stationer who advertised wallpaper for sale in 1811.[33] Also the relationship between the larger towns and their satellites is suggested by Birmingham upholsterer, Isaac Tipping, advertising in 1760 that he would be selling; 'all Sorts of Upholsterer's Goods, at the Sign of the Wool-Pack in Walsall on Tuesday next; at the Sign of the Three Tuns in Wolverhampton on Wednesday next'.[34] This kind of activity was commented on in 1764 by Thomas Turner, a shopkeeper in Sussex, who resented itinerant salesmen:

> July 6th - This day came to Jones's a man with a cartload of milinery, mercery, linen-drapery, silver, &c., to keep a sale for two days.....will catch the ignorant multitude, and perhaps not them only, but people of sense who are not judges of goods and trade.[35]

He implies that the itinerant salesman dealt in poor quality but still got business due to the novelty of the goods.

This summary of availability and quality of goods, using newspaper advertisements can only be impressionistic due to the small sample of newspapers used and because

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[32]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 26/3/1750.
[33]*Salopian Journal,* 27/3/1811.
[34]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 1/9/1760.
[35]Thomas Turner (1979), *The Diary of a Georgian Shopkeeper,* A selection by R.W. Blencowe and M.A. Lower, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 67.

few traders would have gone to the trouble of using advertisements. The sample does however suggest a pattern that was probably to be expected; that Birmingham, Shrewsbury and to a lesser extent Wolverhampton had fashionable and good quality goods on offer throughout the period and on a permanent basis. Smaller towns had far less available and even then it was probably only transient.

Some thought needs to be given to the link between provincial consumption and the London trade. As seen in the advertisements quoted London was often referred to as the source of élite and fashionable goods. To some extent London might be deemed the ideal for provincial consumers to aspire to, although the reality was far more complex and this will be explored further. However, it is useful to establish what constituted élite fashionable consumption, by looking at an example of an aristocrat ordering goods from London, this can then be used as a bench mark for middling consumption. Lord Bradford carried out architectural alterations and additions to his home at Weston Park in Shropshire and then, between 1805 and 1807, ordered quantities of furniture. Lord Bradford's work on his house made it one of the most splendid houses in the West Midlands at the time. Phillis Rogers has done extensive work on the orders from Morel and Hughes in Great Marlborough Street, London, and her observations on them can be used here to encapsulate élite fashionable consumption.[36]

Morel and Hughes were a well connected London firm; Morel had worked for Henry Holland in the 1790s on Carlton House, the home of the Prince of Wales and probably the most fashionable and extravagant house in Britain at the time. Rogers has observed that some of the decorative work at Weston was similar to other work carried out by Henry Holland for other wealthy customers where 'the same team of craftsmen'[37] were employed, including Morel. A picture emerges of a close

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[36]Phillis Rogers (1987), 'A Regency Interior: The Remodelling of Weston Park', *Furniture History*, volume 23, pp. 11-30.
[37]Rogers (1987), p. 14.

relationship between the houses of the élite due to the employment of a small and inter-related set of cabinet making and furnishing firms.

Lord Bradford employed Morel and Hughes to furnish:

> all the main reception rooms on the ground floor, Lady Bradford's rooms on the floor above, together with her husband's dressing room and bathroom. Work was also carried out in the major first floor bedrooms, their associated dressing rooms and a suite of smart attic bedrooms above.[38]

Such extensive work allowed for a great deal of continuity in the schemes, although each room might be conceived individually, the particular style of Morel and Hughes was in evidence throughout. Rogers has noted that in:

> the account frequent mention is made of novelty of the patterns and designs of textiles and furniture and the forms of drapery, mostly referred to as in the 'antique' style. The surviving furniture displays a blend of Greek, Roman and Egyptian motifs on forms of furniture which were as much inspired by contemporary French style as by examples from the antique.[39]

Throughout her article Rogers notes the overlap between furniture and furnishings at Weston and examples in various pattern books but ends with the comment that the Morel and Hughes work predates the published source. She observes that this is:

> an interesting insight into the early development of the Regency style before the majority of influential pattern books such as George Smith's *Household Furniture* or Ackerman's *Repository of Arts* to name but two were published and helped disseminate fashionable designs. The influence of French taste has been noted and the familiarity with antique ornament was probably gained from C. H. Tatham's research into classical ornament sponsored by Henry Holland for his work at Carlton House, together with an apparent knowledge of Thomas Hope's furniture. Although his book *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* was not published until 1807, Hope had admitted visitors since it was completed in 1801.[40]

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[38]Rogers (1987), p. 12.
[39]Rogers (1987), p. 12.
[40]Rogers (1987), p. 17.

Rogers' observation on the sources of the patterns at Weston has been quoted at length since it encapsulates the development of the dissemination of ideas. Tatham's research into classical ornament and Hope's academic application were beyond the scope of most people, even visiting Hope's house would have been limited to the wealthier members of society. However, George Smith and Ackerman's *Repository* translated the rarefied ideas into rather more accessible furniture.

In summary then we can see that Lord Bradford's style of furnishing his home marks it as élite fashionable consumption, due to the top London firm that he employed, and both his and their access to the latest ideas in furnishing; ideas that were circulating amongst the royal and aristocratic members of society. Lord Bradford carried out extensive refurnishing that produced a continuity throughout the house rather than purchasing items piece-meal. All of these aspects were difficult to simulate at a middling level due to the costs involved. What will now be considered is the spread of ideas in the provinces and their translation into middling forms of consumption.

Knowledge of Goods

The spread of ideas concerning fashion and new kinds of goods, to provincial towns and how this knowledge varied, will be explored through a consideration of pattern books; their proliferation in the provinces and how their contents were interpreted. If knowledge of fashionable interiors and furnishings became widespread during the period, for both customers and tradesmen, then the opportunities would have increased for provincial consumers to acquire fashionable goods, providing they had the money to purchase such furnishings. (Visiting London or ordering London goods was a less convenient option.) However what we need also to consider is the nature of the message that reached middling consumers, the nature of its translation by

provincial craftsmen and finally whether provincial consumers wanted precisely the same thing as their metropolitan counterparts.[41]

Furniture historians in the past have tended to ignore provincial makers as purveyors of fashionable goods, assuming that they lacked the necessary cabinet making skills and the aesthetic skills to interpret the patterns. Therefore it is London makers that have mainly been considered. This is typified by Anthea Mullins, writing in 1965:

> Provincial craftsmen could make good plain furniture, but outside London there were few businesses possessing the combination of the different trades necessary to produce the luxurious state furniture. But a few certainly existed and it seems strange that they should have been so completely ignored by historians.[42]

Mullins implies that only firms producing 'London quality' are worthy of study and hence her research on the provincial makers who supplied Harewood House. The assumption that provincial makers should mostly be makers of plain furniture with just a few exceptions ignores the gradations of manufacture that existed.

In contrast to this view point provincial consumption will be examined here for evidence of a distinct taste. Rather than see provincial production as the 'poor relation' of London it should be seen as a different market. Ideas did spread and were interpreted, resulting in commodities that were desired by provincial customers.

First hand knowledge of fashionable and élite goods at the outset of the period was limited to a minority of people, who had access to influential buildings and their contents. Although some grand houses were open for people to view they were not

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[41]Vickery has found that Lancashire gentry had a rather mixed reaction to metropolitan tastes. Amanda Vickery (1993), 'Women and the World of Goods: a Lancashire Consumer and her Possessions, 1751-81', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London: Routledge, pp. 290-1.

[42]Anthea Mullins (1965), 'Local Furniture-makers at Harewood House as Representative of Provincial Craftsmenship', *Furniture History*, volume 1, pp. 32-38, p. 32.

open to everyone.[43] Most people had to rely on printed sources. Therefore the primary way of spreading knowledge of architectural and interior decoration styles was through pattern books.[44] Printed source material relating to architectural styles and ornament had been available from the sixteenth century, although often as separate printed sheets. It was in the eighteenth century that, for gentlemen at least, this source became more widely available with major architectural works being published such as *Antiquities of Palmyra* (1753) by John Wood and *Antiquities of Athens* (1762-94) by James Stuart and Nicholas Revett.[45] A great many such works were published and reflected the interest in classical architecture as a source for eighteenth century building projects and they 'provided a wide vocabulary of ornament and architectural detail, which was raided and adapted by cabinet makers for the rest of the century.'[46]

The cabinet maker who became particularly influential for combining the classical motifs with practical designs for furniture was Thomas Chippendale. He also established the form of furniture pattern books, with the publication of *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* in 1762.[47] Although little was published immediately[48] a great many other publications followed Chippendale's formula towards the end of the eighteenth century. These publications were expensive volumes that probably only reached a rather select audience. At the gentry level they

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[43]Peter Mandler says that in the 18th century 'Visitors were carefully vetted at the lodge gates'. The owners of grand houses wanted to show them off but only to people with sufficient 'taste' to appreciate them. P. Mandler (1997), *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home,* New Haven and London: Yale, p. 8.
[44]See Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (1998), 'Commerce and the Commodity: Graphic Display and Selling New Consumer Goods in Eighteenth-Century England', in Michael North and David Ormrod (eds), *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800,* Aldershot: Ashgate.
[45]For accounts of the development of pattern books see Elizabeth White (1990), *Pictorial Dictionary of British 18th Century Furniture Design: The Printed Sources,* Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club; Charles Saumarez Smith (1993), *Eighteenth-Century Decoration,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; Pauline Agius (1984), *Ackermann's Regency Furniture and Interiors,* introduction by Stephen Jones, London: Cameron Books.
[46]Jones, introduction to Agius (1984), p. 13.
[47]Thomas Chippendale (1754), *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director,* London: published by the author.
[48]The major exception was the influential Ince and Mayhew's pattern book of 1762. William Ince and John Mayhew (1960), *The Univeral System of Household Furniture* [1762], with a preface by Ralph Edwards, London: Alec Tiranti Ltd.

undoubtedly spread ideas of fashions in interiors to the provinces. Sheraton and Hepplewhite were particularly influential.[49] However, the situation changed in the early years of the nineteenth century with the publication of smaller volumes such as George Smith's *Designs for Household Furniture,* that offered designs that were less expensive to carry out.[50] The publication of magazines, particularly Ackerman's *The Repository of Arts*, greatly helped to disseminate ideas to a wider audience.[51] This trend gathered pace and by the 1830s and 1840s books that were aimed at the customer, rather than the craftsperson, and combining designs with advice on the arrangement of the home, were being published in great numbers. Loudon is a prime example, becoming a best seller.[52] Between 1760 and 1860 pattern books were constantly evolving in format and content; from élite tastes for the very wealthy to a broader and more varied content to predominantly middle class consumers.

Proof of which craftspeople used these publications is scanty since comparatively few pattern books survive, probably due to them being used in the workshop and discarded.[53] These publications would have included many with a short print run which would have limited their availability, however, a great many were produced; even as early as 1762 a bookseller was issuing a catalogue of 23 'Books of Ornament.[54] The lists of provincial makers as subscribers in some of them suggests that fashionable ideas were disseminated to a wide range of producers. For example

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[49] White draws attention to these two designers; some of Hepplewhite's designs were included in the *Cabinet-maker's London Book of Prices* in 1793, and 'In many respects Sheraton's work in the 1790s anticipated styles which came into popular use in the first decade of the nineteenth century.' Elizabeth White (1990), *Pictorial Dictionary of British 18th Century Furniture Designs: The Printed Sources,* Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, pp. 55-58. Thomas Sheraton (1793), *The Cabinet-maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book*, London; G. and A. Hepplewhite (1794*), The Cabinet-maker and Upholsterer's Guide*, London.

[50]George Smith (1808), *A Collection of Designs for Household Furniture,* London: J. Taylor.

[51]This magazine was published from 1809 to 1828. See Agius (1984).

[52]Loudon and his wife published a number of books and a magazine. The most well known publication was; J. C. Loudon (1839), *Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture* [1833], London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman. The *Encyclopedia* was far more than a guide to architecture having detailed instructions on interior decoration and furnishings.

[53]T.F. Friedman (1975), 'Two Eighteenth-Century Catalogues of Ornamental Pattern Books', *Furniture History,* volume 11, pp. 66-75, p. 66.

[54]Friedman (1975), p. 67.

the 1853 publication *The Cabinet Maker's Assistant* listed 16 Birmingham firms as subscribers.[55] It is not clear to what extent pattern books reached consumers directly. As the period progressed knowledge of pattern books would no doubt have spread due to the increased circulation of newspapers, which sometimes carried advertisements for these publications. In 1829, for example, the *Salopian Journal* carried an advertisement for 'Loudon's Gardening, Agriculture &c... This day is published An Encyclopedia of Gardening.'[56] Distribution networks for books published in London (pattern books were invariably published there) to the provinces also improved in the nineteenth century.[57] It seems likely that during the latter part of the period the middling sort were acquiring greater knowledge of fashionable taste as were the craftsmen who produced goods.

However, it would be simplistic to claim that as pattern books spread ideas so total standardisation of fashionable ideas followed. One of the intriguing aspects of provincial taste is the piece-meal adoption of fashion. The use of pattern books was not the same as purchasing goods directly from a fashionable maker; the illustrations were open to interpretation and were also influenced by the materials and the skills of the craftsperson concerned. Therefore an examination of the use of pattern books is useful for establishing provincial taste in relation to London taste.

Chippendale's *Director* was important for its comprehensiveness of both furniture types and of current styles. It was aimed both at the élite customer and the maker as the title suggests. However, the form of the *Director* was ensconced in an élite visual language; that of the architectural draftsman without explanations to aid interpretation. Whilst providing readers with visual guidance it did not help those

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[55]P. Thompson (1853), *The Cabinet Maker's Assistant*, Edinburgh and London: Blackie and Son. 600 cabinet makers and joiners subscribed to Sheraton's *Cabinet-Maker's and Upholsterer's Drawing Book,* first published in four parts between 1791-4. Thomas Sheraton (1972), Introduction by Joseph Aronson, *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book* [1793], New York: Dover Publications, p. 6.
[56]*Salopian Journal*, 7/1/1829.
[57]John Feather (1988), *A History of Publishing*, London: Croom Helm, pp. 167 and 171.

who were not already skilled in design and perhaps encouraged inappropriate application of ideas. This was also true of the later eighteenth century pattern books that were similar in format. Some designs given in these books can be traced to items of furniture, where styles were used inexpertly perhaps mixing styles in individual pieces, and with decoration applied inappropriately to the individual item.

An example of misapplied or at least clumsily applied fashionable ideas can be seen in the desk made for Sir Nathaniel Curzon, later Lord Scarsdale, for his library at Kedleston Hall. This desk was made in 1764 by an estate carpenter. Although it was common practice for large houses to have much of their carpentry, joinery and even cabinet making work for lesser rooms done 'in house', this desk is unusual since the library is in the central block where the state rooms were located. Around the kneehole some rococo decoration was applied, which had been produced by the carvers working under James Gravenor, who carved the lavish furniture in other rooms in the house in the 1760s.[58] While Gravenor's rococo decoration was appropriate for the dressing room and bed chamber the library required classical treatment, according to contemporary opinion. The decoration on the desk therefore appears incongruous and unplanned. It is certainly not a prestigious piece comparable with the Chippendale desk, made for Sir Rowland Winn of Nostell Priory. This desk cost the grand sum of £72 10s in 1766[59] and was chosen as part of the backdrop of the Conversation Piece painted of Sir Rowland and Lady Winn.[60] It would be difficult to access in many cases whether misapplied ideas were due to the incompetence of the maker or lack of 'taste' in the customer, although in the instance of the Kedleston desk, it seems unlikely that Sir Nathaniel Curzon had been consulted over its decoration.

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[58]National Trust Guide to *Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire*, (1994), London: National Trust, p31. Although Gravenor was a local craftsman, a carver from Derby, his skills at carving and gilding were considerable. Beard and Gilbert (1986).
[59]National Trust Guide for *Nostell Priory*, (1994), London: National Trust, p. 12.
[60]Reproduced in Mark Girouard (1987), *A Country House Companion,* London: Century, facing p. 33.

Further examples of the interpretation of fashionable ideas is provided by the exhibition mounted by Temple Newsam Museum in 1977; *Back-Stairs Furniture from Country Houses*. While some of the furniture is regional in nature some pieces are clearly derived from fashionable sources. One example of an armchair dated c. 1765 the curators of the exhibition describe as having 'mildy Gothic pattern back displays the influence of design from Chippendale's *Director*'.[61]

Evidence survives of two West Midlands joiners having recourse to pattern books and fashionable items of furniture. While this evidence is slender it is significant since they are early in our period and of similar date to the above examples from grand country houses. The first example is Robert Urwick, a joiner in Shrewsbury. The inventory[62] of his workshop was made at his death in 1744 and contained '4 Books of Carpentry 4 Books of Articheture'. The tools listed include a number of items for carving, so it is possible that his work extended to producing architectural details for rooms, which would have made the pattern books highly necessary. The second example, although slightly later, is for a more rural carpenter and joiner. The notebook of Thomas Shakshaft was kept from 1751 to 1763.[63] Shakshaft lived in Middleton, half way between Sutton Coldfield and Tamworth in rural Warwickshire. It is clear from this notebook that Thomas Shakshaft did mostly joinery work; making gates, floors, doors and window frames. A couple of references were made to items of furniture; '2 days at Mr butlers making a table - 1s 8d....one day a making bedsteds 10d.' Throughout the notebook appear drawings that are fairly precise diagrams for making gates, sometimes with measurements. In contrast to these working drawings, for the joiner's trade, there appear three drawings that suggest an interest in items that were probably outside the sphere of Shakshaft's work. The first is a tiny drawing that appears to be a classical arch or bridge, the second is a bureau,

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[61]C. Gilbert (1977), *An Exhibition of Back-stairs Furniture from Country Houses*, Leeds: Temple Newsam, pages not numbered, the comment referred to item 7 in the exhibition catalogue.
[62]Probate inventory, LJRO.
[63]BRL, MSS 556647 (IIR41).

drawn carefully and with a side view to show the arrangement of shelves inside the flap. The third item, is of a writing cabinet or secretaire which displays design features of a Chippendale style piece of furniture, therefore right up to date. (Figure 4:1) Although the pieces are poorly drawn and the secretaire appears next to a recipe 'for the Ague' all the furniture was fashionable rather than regional or 'vernacular'. Shakshaft must either have seen pattern books or sketched these items from furniture he had seen, perhaps in the home of a wealthy customer for whom he was carrying out joinery work.[64]

A later example and showing even more clearly the influence of pattern books can be discerned in the advertisement for the upholsterer, Tanner, used in an 1815 trade directory. (See Figure 2:4) Hepplewhite had first made use of room settings for his pattern book in 1788[65] and the Tanner advertisement draws on this idea with the individual items that he makes/sells being given an ambience by the notion of a fashionable interior. The Tanner advertisement owes a lot to the style of presentation of designs in *The Repository of Arts*, a monthly publication produced by Rudolf Ackermann from 1809 to 1828. (Figure 4:2) This style of presentation explains fashionable use in the pattern book, while the advertisement displays knowledge of how the fashions are to be applied. No doubt this was to establish Tanner's ability to offer expert advice in interior decoration; an important aspect of the upholsterer's work. However, the placing of the sofa between the windows was an unusual feature that does not correspond with fashionable usage at the time; sofas were placed against the internal walls or set into an alcove often with festoons of drapery above them.[66] In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century furniture had prescribed uses

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[64]In 1755 Shakshaft recorded two trips to London giving the names of towns passed through on the journey but no other details. The only other indication of his activities outside Middleton are lists of clothing that he had purchased at Tamworth and Fazeley Fairs in 1751 and 1752.

[65]A. Hepplewhite (1794), *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide*, 3rd edition, London: I. and J. Taylor.

[66]No pattern book illustrations or instructions, or illustrations of interiors such as those found in Peter Thornton (1984), *Authentic Decor: the Domestic Interior 1620-1920*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, Charlotte Gere (1989), *Nineteenth-Century Decoration: the Art of the Interior*, London:

and it was important to observe the appropriateness of usage.[67] This can be seen then as both an example of inexpert interpretation of the fashions disseminated by pattern books, but also of the popularisation of fashionable tastes in the provinces.

A particular example of a pattern book and its relationship with the provinces is demonstrated by the James Barron publication of 1814 *Modern and Elegant Designs of Cabinet and Upholstery Furniture*.[68] James Barron had a branch of his business in Birmingham at 11 Lower Temple Street and a 'warehouse' in London at 73 Wells Street, Oxford Street. Birmingham and London trade directories listed him as a brassfounder.[69] Although *Modern and Elegant Designs* appears to be a pattern book of furniture designs it is an elaborate advertisement for the metal furniture which these trades employed, such as curtain poles, finials and pins. Barron's publication was unusual since metal goods tended to be offered for sale through trade catalogues, in other words more prosaic publications.[70] Such catalogues also tended to be anonymous whereas Barron promoted his business establishments as well as goods for sale.

James Barron was clearly a self publicist and ambitious entrepreneur; his links between Birmingham and London and the dual trades of metal work and cabinet making make him worthy of closer scrutiny. Barron's address in London, just off Oxford Street, was in the heart of the fashionable cabinet making area.[71] Whereas his

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Weidenfeld and Nicolson, or Charles Saumarez-Smith (1993), *Eighteenth-Century Decoration,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, could be found that depict a sofa between windows in this way.

[67]Anna Somers Cocks comments on the present day use of bookcases for displaying china in historic houses 'Such a confusion of categories would be quite atypical of the eighteenth century.' A.S. Cocks (1989), 'The Nonfunctional Use of Ceramics in the English Country House During the Eighteenth Century' in G. Jackson-Stops, *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House,* Washington: National Gallery, Washington and University Press of New England, p. 204.

[68]James Barron (1814), *Modern and Elegant Designs for Cabinet and Upholstery Furniture*, London: Thistleton.

[69]*Post Office Directory of London* (1815), London: Kelly and *Commercial Directory of Birmingham* (1816-7), Manchester: Wardle and Pratt.

[70]Berg and Clifford describe the illustrations in these publications as being like trade cards. Berg and Clifford (1998), p. 198.

[71]The Winterthur copy has the owners name and address; G. Alderton, 31 Portland Street, which is near Oxford Street. Unfortunately it is not known whether Alderton was in the furniture trade.

Birmingham address was in the metal wares district rather than a fashionable street for retailing. It has always been assumed that Barron came from London and opened a branch in Birmingham, to be close to the metal working trades.[72] The brass hardware trade was important in Birmingham.[73] The Birmingham trade was made up of many small manufacturers who depended on factors for distribution. From the mid eighteenth century it became normal for the factors to use catalogues to communicate information about goods to their customers.[74] These middlemen protected their own position by suppressing the names of individual makers,[75] and Ehninger claims, names found in these trade catalogues were more likely to refer to the factor than the maker.[76] Barron's trade directory listing claims he was a brass founder, he may also have been a factor. The instructions in his pattern book asking that 'Gentlemen in the Country are requested to write to Birmingham for Blinds and to London for Ironmongery Goods';[77] may have been a precaution against customers dealing with the makers in Birmingham direct.

What James Barron realised was that not only was metal hardware very important for achieving the fashionable interior in the early nineteenth century[78] but that Pattern Books were an effective and fashionable medium for promoting such goods. Barron gave far more plates on window treatments to show off the rods, finials etc. but otherwise followed a similar formula to cabinet making pattern books. (Figure 4:3) However, it is noticeable that Barron's *Modern and Elegant Designs* was a rather less

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[72]In 1881 Prosser, commenting on Barron's patents, states that he 'was probably an importation from London'. R.B. Prosser (1970), foreword by Asa Briggs, *Birmingham Inventors and Inventions* [1881], East Ardsley, Wakefield: S.R. Publishers, p. 187.

[73]Jillian Ehninger (1993), *"With the Richest ornaments Just Imported from France": Ornamental Hardware on Boston, New York and Philadelphia Furniture, 1800-1840,* unpublished PhD thesis, University of Delaware, p. 33. Ehninger quotes 33 brass founders in Birmingham in the Sketchley directory of 1770 and 85 in Pigot's directory for 1816-17, 11 being furniture brasswork makers.

[74]T.R. Crom (1994), *An Eighteenth Century British Brass Hardware Catalogue,* Florida: the author, p. 2.

[75]R. Gentle and R. Field (1994), *Domestic Metalwork 1640-1820,* Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, p. 83.

[76]Ehninger (1993), p. 27.

[77]Barron (1814), title page.

[78]Thornton (1984), p. 154.

lavish publication than other late eighteenth and early nineteenth century examples: the paper was of poorer quality, the engravings lacked detail and an amateurish note is struck by the plates not being numbered consecutively. In fact the numbering appears to be totally random, with several dates appearing on them, no artist's name quoted and a mixture of addresses used; the London address or both London and Birmingham addresses. These aspects indicate a slightly ephemeral publication, Barron even says on the title page 'To be continued annually', suggesting a trade catalogue style of publication,[79] and aimed primarily at the trade. Barron addressed the trade of cabinet makers and upholsterers as the readership of his book claiming that they had supported him in the past and now he was providing them with this publication 'in grateful acknowledgement of those favours' and that he did not expect 'any pecuniary advantage to derive from the undertaking.'[80]

However, Barron did not only provide tradespeople with ideas for the use of metal furniture; his book was also an excellent advertisement for goods that he produced or at least sold at his warehouse. The plates, offering suggestions for the use of the metal furniture on cabinet ware, and in furnishing schemes, was followed by the 'business' part of the book; lists of the goods that Barron stocked together with a plate advertising his 'Patent Roller Blinds' and a page of tassels and fringe designs with a label added 'The stile of Fringes for this work is from Patterns Supplied by Messrs David Yates & Sons, Manchester'. Trimmings were also an integral part of achieving the fashionable interior.

Barron demonstrated his entrepreneurial drive by patenting a number of devices at a time when there were few patents for furniture. Taking out patents was time consuming and expensive until the rules were simplified in 1852 with the Patent Law

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[79]Since none survive one can only assume that this was an unfulfilled promise.
[80]Barron (1814), p. 1.

Reform Act.[81] Most patents connected with furniture making at this time were castors and mechanisms for adjusting chairs and bedsteads.[82] Mechanical devices were a prominent part of furniture construction in the nineteenth century, a pre-occupation perhaps first noticeable in the work of Sheraton whose pattern book was full of ingenious ideas.[83] Barron is typical, with patents for castors and bedsteads as well as the items that he was advertising in his publication; window blind mechanisms and; 'improvements for making knobs for drawers, doors and cabinet furniture'[84] Not only was Barron topical in his interests but also in his marketing methods. According to Edwards; 'Patents were a very potent sales promotion tool which, combined with the idea of fashion changes, must have encouraged a lively market.'[85] Barron used his window blind patent on his Birmingham bill heads[86] and as we have seen here, in a lavish pattern book.

The Barron pattern book through its relationship with London and Birmingham suggests two things about provincial trade and consumption. Firstly that the Birmingham trades needed close links with fashionable ideas for their goods to succeed. Secondly that the provinces were an extension of the London market place which increased in magnitude as the goods for sale were produced in larger quantities through industrial methods. There was clearly a difference in the style of promotion between Birmingham and London, but Birmingham held a far more prominent position with respect to the élite fashions of London than any of the other towns

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[81]Clive Edwards (1993), *Victorian Furniture: Technology and Design*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 146. The Patent Law Reform Act was part of a major re-organisation of the Patent Office which resulted in the New Patent Office being established in 1853. Edwards, 1993, p. 156.

[82]Edwards (1993), p. 145.

[83]Sheraton (1972) [1793].

[84]Details of Barron's patents from *Patents for Inventions: Abridgments of Specifications relating to Furniture and Upholstery A.D. 1620-1866*, (1869), London: Great Britain Patent Office. 1809, no.3282, improvements for the apparatus for rollers for window blinds,p. 26. 1816, no.3976, improvements on castors p. 39. 1818, no.4320, improvements for making knobs for drawers, doors and cabinet furniture p. 42. 1823, no.4828 (with Jacob Wilson), improvements in the construction and manufacture of window blinds p. 45. 1836, no.7014 (with Edward Thomas), improvements on bedsteads and apparatus for bedsteads (7 inventions) p. 69.

[85]Edwards (1993), p. 156.

[86]BRL, MBP 479.

looked at.[87] This distinction can also be noted in the list of subscribers to *The Cabinet Maker's Assistant* which listed 16 Birmingham traders, cabinet makers. upholsterers and carvers and gilders, but no other town in the West Midlands was represented.

The spread of fashionable ideas to the provinces was aided by two lines of development in the pattern book form, which occurred from about the 1830s, and which may have influenced, to some degree, the differences between consumption patterns in provincial towns. One development was tighter instructions to the trade on pricing of their work, through the Cabinet Makers' Union and the other was more practical advice to be found in pattern books and domestic advice books, to both the customer and maker. Both of these developments, happening simultaneously, led in the same direction, to greater homogeneity in household furnishings.

Looking first at the advent of Price Books as an influence on provincial taste. Price Books, produced by the Cabinet Makers Union, gave the trade exact formulas for arriving at a price for cabinet work. These publications began in 1788 in the London trade but quickly spread to provincial towns, including Birmingham, and to sub sections of the trade such as chair making and carving and gilding.[88] Since they were aimed at the trade, they were utilitarian in format and the style of illustration, and were revised or had supplements to keep them up to date. From the early nineteenth century they had reached a fairly tight set of rules that the trade fought hard to adhere to, in order that their piece-rates might be protected. Since the trade of cabinet making involved numerous small processes, that had almost endless variations, it was difficult to establish rules for every application and craftsmen were meant to negotiate individual jobs based on the general guidelines. However, it was perhaps

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[87]This was no doubt also true of Manchester, seen here as the supplier of fashionable trimmings for furnishings.

[88]For a list of Price Books see C. Gilbert and P. Kirkham (eds) (1982), 'London and Provincial Books of Prices: Comment and Bibliography, *Furniture History,* volume 18, pp. 1-266, pp. 16-19.

inevitable that the jobs already priced up should be preferred since they were already agreed. The Price Books therefore had the effect of standardising the trade; what was made as well as how much was charged.[89] This also, to some extent, helped to eliminate differences between London and the provinces.

The second homogenising influence on furnishings was the proliferation of books, from the early nineteenth century onwards, that gave detailed accounts of how to achieve fashionable interiors. For example, in 1819 James Arrowsmith published *An Analysis of Drapery* which gave, for the time, very detailed instructions and diagrams on how to achieve the fashionable French inspired drapery window curtains. Arrowsmith claimed the move away from traditional English methods towards French styles 'required more than ordinary ability in the workman'[90] and therefore he had published *An Analysis of Drapery* to provide the necessary information. This kind of detail became more common with such publications as Thomas King's *The Upholsterer's Accelerator* in 1833. For the general carpenter, joiner and cabinet maker there were Henry Whitaker and M.A. Nicholson's *The Practical Cabinet Maker, Upholsterer and Decorator's Treasury of Designs* in 1851 and P. Thompson's *The Cabinet Maker's Assistant* in 1853. For achieving the decorative paint effects on walls and furniture Henry Lawford gave instructions in *The Cabinet of Practical, Useful and Decorative Furniture Designs* in 1856.[91] As the titles indicate, these books took a practical and less academic approach to design, than had the eighteenth century pattern books. This change was perhaps aided by the strict rules of

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[89]Gilbert and Kirkham claim that details of the pricing reveal that 'batch production' and the use of 'standard decorative elements ready-made from a specialist supplier' were common, all pointing to greater standardisation of the trade. Gilbert and Kirkham (1982), p. 11.
[90]James Arrowsmith (1852), *The Paper-Hanger's Companion,* Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, p. 81.
[91]James Arrowsmith (1819), *An Analysis of Drapery*, London: M. Bell; Thomas King (c. 1833), *The Upholsterer's Accelerator,* London: The Architectural and Scientific Library; Henry Whitaker and M.A. Nicholson (1851), *The Practical Cabinet Maker, Upholsterer and Decorator's Treasury of Designs,* London: Peter Jackson; P. Thompson (1853), *The Cabinet Maker's Assistant,* Edinburgh and London: Blackie and Son; Henry Lawford (1856), *The Cabinet of Practical, Useful and Decorative Furniture Designs,* London: published by the author.

classicism[92] becoming less important as more eclectic styles became fashionable from the 1830s onwards.

Two more books complete this brief survey of the development of pattern books up to the 1850s; books that specifically addressed women and a middle class audience. *The Workwoman's Guide* of 1838[93] gave simple instructions for women to follow. As the author stated in her preface 'in particular, that Clergymen's Wives, Young Married Women, School-mistresses, and Ladies' Maids may find, the 'Workwoman's Guide' a fast and serviceable friend.' Women in households that could not afford the work of tradespeople might achieve for themselves fashionable furnishings with this guidance. Home made furnishings were also mentioned in Loudon's *Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture*, first published in 1833, where he recommended Thomas King's *The Upholsterer's Accelorator* for 'ladies who may wish to cut out their own curtains'[94] but more generally Loudon addressed a wide middle class market 'in an attempt to elevate the average person's understanding of architecture and peripherally, household furnishings.'[95] Loudon gave advice not only on design with thousands of illustrations of furniture but also on taste and how to organise and use the home - in ways that were appropriate for a middle class income. This was a far more detailed and complete approach than had been usual in the traditional pattern books.

So, through printed sources the spread of fashionable ideas to the provinces advanced during the period. Customers could more easily become knowledgeable and the craftspeople were more informed about what was fashionable. (To what extent the

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[92]Eighteenth century pattern books had often reproduced the 'orders' of Greek columns, capitals and entablature to teach craftsmen the correct application and proportions. The Greek revival, in the early nineteenth century, also demanded the strict application of classicism, as in the example of Thomas Hope (1807), *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, London: Longman.
[93] A lady (1838), *The Workwoman's Guide*, London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co.
[94]Loudon (1839), p. 1076.
[95]G.C. Winkler (1993), introduction to reprint of Thomas King, *The Upholsterer's Accelerator* [1833], New York: Acanthus Press, p. xii.

latest fashions were wanted in the provinces is a rather different matter and will be returned to shortly.) What is important to note here is the opening up of the fashion system due to the increase in printed material. A wider audience were able to participate; middle class rather than only the élite. Modest craftspeople, rather than just the top London firms, were interpreting fashions with numerous gradations of 'taste' and skill. Did these developments lead to fashionable ideas being adopted uniformly and a greater homogeneity in homemaking? Were provincial customers, at the end of the period, still obliged to compromise over access to the latest fashions?[96] Or did their choices reflect provincial notions of good taste that were somewhat different to London fashions? A consideration of a few examples of customers in the West Midlands and their differing inclination to be fashionable will go some way to answering this.

Inclination to Purchase: some West Midlands' examples

The purpose of this section is to analyse the purchasing strategy of customers in four locations to see if it is possible to detect differences and to deduce whether such differences were, at least in part, due to location. Weatherill based her findings on evidence in inventories but a different approach has been adopted for this section. Inventories rarely provide details of listed objects; quality, age and design are difficult to determine and all of these would have influenced their status as symbols of fashionable and conspicuous consumption. To overcome this problem the examples to be considered here are all derived from the transactions between customers and people supplying furnishings; orders and bills for tradesmen and an account book. This will allow the process of acquisition to be examined; the use of

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[96]Pattern books could remain in circulation for many years. E.T. Joy quotes the example of *The Complete Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* by Siddons, published in England in 1829 and an American version published in Philadelphia in 1852 and reissued in 1906. Edward Joy (1977), *Pictorial Dictionary of British Nineteenth-Century Furniture Design,* Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, p. 69.

printed sources and designers, London cabinet makers and a range of local tradespeople.

Birmingham

Examples for Birmingham will be considered first since Birmingham was the most dynamic town studied and was therefore the most likely to demonstrate the fashionable consumption that Weatherill describes. The case study for Birmingham is provided by the Boulton family; Matthew Boulton, his daughter, Ann and his son, Matthew Robinson Boulton. The Boulton family fall into Davidoff and Hall's Higher rank category, outlined in the previous chapter and as wealthy entrepreneurs they correspond with Weatherill's high consumer bracket. The bills, receipts and letters concerning furniture and furnishings for these three households, spanning the years 1768-1838, offer an example that can act as a bench mark for the households in other towns.

The Boulton archive is extensive,[97] not only for furnishings but generally. The existence of minute slips of paper recording the purchase of a few loaves of bread, suggests that a policy of keeping almost all household bills prevailed. Certainly for Matthew and Ann Boulton's households enough survives to form a good idea of consumption patterns; providing London and local, whole room and individual items, new goods and repairs, fashionable and traditional items, for main and minor rooms. This is less the case for Matthew Robinson Boulton whose accounts were probably dispersed due to the family having several homes; while quite a number of bills survive for Birmingham traders there is only one for a London maker which is unlikely to reflect the family's purchases. However, this situation is somewhat

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[97]The Boulton archive is at Birmingham Reference Library under the classification 'Matthew Boulton Papers' (BRL MBP). The Boulton material comprises approximately 27 boxes of household accounts. The documents are in the process of being sorted into envelopes, others are still in bundles. Some boxes contain hundreds of documents. Each box has a separate number but individual documents do not, except in the boxes that have been sorted into envelopes.

remedied by the survival of a series of letters between Miss Wilkinson. Mrs Boulton's sister who acted as housekeeper, and Mr Westley, the Boulton's agent at Soho. These letters contain many detailed references to the family's preferences: when to purchase in London and the merits of different local producers. Therefore for all three households a fairly full picture emerges of their relationship to local and London makers.

A summary of the extensive number of documents relating to furnishing for these households is given in Table 4:1 followed by a more detailed look at a few of the most revealing transactions.

Table 4:1 Orders for furnishings from London and Birmingham tradespeople for Matthew, Ann and Matthew Robinson Boulton.

London orders	Matthew Boulton	Ann Boulton	Matthew Robinson Boulton
Dates of orders	1797-98	1819-23	1812
Number of orders	4	19	1
Number of tradesmen	2	12	1
Total cost	£424.03.02	£645.12.04	£31.11.06
Birmingham orders			
Dates of orders	1768-95	1819-25	1813-26
Number of orders	18	54	10
Number of tradesmen	8	17	10
Total cost	£102.07.09	£352.13.09	£085.10.11

The most noteworthy features are the fullness of the accounts for Ann Boulton and the intensity of her homemaking activities over a few years. This is the period when she lived in her own home at Thornhill until her death in 1829. The other point is that, although there were far more bills and receipts for Birmingham suppliers, the costs involved were far lower than the London orders, indicating that the nature of ordering from the two towns was different for all three households, although they did not mirror each other exactly.

Matthew Boulton

The Birmingham orders combined fairly modest purchases from some of the better cabinet makers and upholsterers, a larger number of servicing orders from a variety of tradespeople and in addition there were a number of small purchases of what might be described as traditional items. The better tradespeople were represented by Thomas Smallwood and Thomas Wakefield. For example Thomas Smallwood, of Bull Street, Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer supplied in 1788; 'Two Mah.y Night Chairs....3.0.0.' and '12 Mah.y Urn Back Chairs Brass Naild 16.4.0', as well as oilcloth and wallpaper and a cushion for a church seat. In 1790 Smallwood sent in a bill for various repairs to items of furniture and for remaking some mattresses. Although this bill detailed items and services that were inexpensive and of a prosaic nature, the total bill came to the large amount of £30.12.3. In 1795 Smallwood was doing a variety of things for Boulton, for example:

Undoing & fresh Covering 6 loose Seats in Damask new hair tacks &c	0.07.06
A Mah.y Celerett on Castors	2.02.00
Undoing & Restuffing a Sofa Cov.d with Silk Damask new hair webb Canvas Brass nails &c	3.00.00
New Covering two Elbow Chairs hair Silk tuffs &c Repairing the frames	0.09.00
¾ yd of Turkey Carpet	0.05.03

The total of this bill was £13.5.9.[98]

Similarly Thomas Wakefield, upholsterer, of the High Street, put up curtains and beds, altered carpets and put up wall paper, some of which he supplied and some 'from Mr Smallwoods' during May and June of 1791 and 1792.[99] The time of year suggests that Boulton was employing tradespeople to carry out extensive spring cleaning. Since both Smallwood and Wakefield were high class tradespeople for

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[98]BRL, MBP 474.
[99]BRL, MBP 468 and 474.

Birmingham it is significant that Boulton chose them to service his home. Boulton added to the goods in the main rooms of his house from cabinet makers and upholsterers who offered the best wares in Birmingham and were therefore the most likely to be supplied with materials and ideas from fashionable sources.

By contrast Boulton purchased numerous items of a rather traditional nature from less significant tradespeople, such as Bunney and Bullock, neither of whose names appear in trade directories. Bunney supplied a cradle and a child's chair in 1768 for which he charged 17s 6d.[100] Bullock's bills date from 1788 and 1792 and include basic items such as brooms and brushes, a basket for doves and a garden basket.[101] These are basic household goods and Boulton was purchasing them from what he regarded as a suitable source. What is perhaps more significant is that he also chose to purchase items of furniture from such a source; rush bottomed chairs and Upton elbow chairs.[102] Boulton was falling back on traditional items probably for service areas of the house and he obtained them from fairly humble sources rather than using cabinet makers, to supply basic but fashionable style items for these requirements. This suggests that Boulton observed a hierarchy in his choice of tradespeople for different rooms in his house i.e. better class for main rooms and lesser people for the background areas.

However, there are some bills that suggest a more confusing use of Birmingham tradespeople. These were the goods supplied by John Pendrill, whom Boulton employed quite extensively in 1792-3. Pendrill does not appear in any trade directories as a cabinet maker and it might have been the case that his work fell into the joiner category; he fitted locks, made a door and other basic items such as 'A

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[100]BRL, MBP 430.
[101]BRL, MBP 474 and 483.
[102]Upton chairs remain a mystery despite appearing in a number of inventories in the later eighteenth century but they were probably regional style chairs and, given Bullock's other work, may have had rush seats.

Cupboard for Boots &c'. Most of the work for Boulton was in deal but some work was more exacting, for example:[103]

A Deal side board covered with green Bays with two Tressels to Do. & a stand to set Waitors upon	1.01.00
A Garden Seat	5.08.00
Repairing and Cleaning a writing desk	0.03.06
A Mahogany Box for experiments with Mercury	0.09.06
A Deal Chest with 12 Drawers and Door to front	3.08.00
Large stools for Telescope	0.11.06
A nest of Drawers for Medals	1.03.06

The sideboard may have been for servant use but the writing desk was presumably for a family room. The scientific items were probably for Boulton's Fossilry and Laboratory which were in the grounds rather than the main house.[104] While this was not part of the house it still had some importance. Boulton would have used the room with other members of the Lunar Society. It served therefore a mixture of formal and informal use.

Boulton's dealings with Pendrill perhaps reflects the prevailing situation in Birmingham at the end of the eighteenth century. While the work of some cabinet makers and upholsterers was clearly good quality the hierarchy of tradesmen was not fixed and some fell into a 'grey area'. Boulton's choice of tradesmen might also have been a reflection of his financial and social position. In some ways Matthew Boulton was an exceptional person and therefore not representative of middling sort consumption, even of the Higher rank since his business activities brought him into contact with aristocrats and even royalty, as well as architects and designers.

However, Boulton began his life in a more modest style and no doubt his ambitions

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[103]BRL, MBP 469.
[104]Boulton later made changes in the house to create a fossilry in the room next to the dining room. These changes date between 1798 and 1803 according to lists made of the windows in the house. Information supplied by Soho House Museum.

for his home grew in proportion to his business. The continuation of modest consumption patterns may reflect someone who was a 'self made man'.

The contrast between the London and Birmingham orders may reflect Boulton's enhanced social position. All of the London orders date from the later period of his life after he had rebuilt Soho House and was presumably intent on furnishing it in a style that fitted the architectural pretensions of its exterior.[105] By 1796 Boulton had a clear idea of what he wanted, not just in terms of furnishings, but also of the kind of statement he wished to make about his home; one that even the best Birmingham cabinet makers could not supply. The London orders were for complete rooms, they were extensive and represent significant additions to Boulton's household furnishings.

For example between 1797 and 1805[106] Matthew Boulton ordered numerous items from James Newton, a fashionable cabinet maker and upholsterer in Wardour Street. Ellwood claims that Boulton was 'Newton's only (recorded) non-aristocratic client'[107] and this supports the supposition that Boulton was exceptional.

A complete set of matching furniture and furnishings was acquired in June 1798 for his daughter's sitting room (Ann was a semi invalid and had her own sitting room next to her bedroom on the first floor). This consisted of japanned chairs with caned seats matching cornice and green and white curtains made up in French style draperies, also a satin wood writing table, work table and 2 pole screens. The bedroom furnishing scheme seems to have matched but with dimity curtains.[108]

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[105]VCH, *Warwickshire*, volume 7, p. 50.
[106]James Newton bills and correspondence, BRL, MBP Miscellaneous Papers Box 1.
[107]Giles Ellwood (1995), 'James Newton', *Furniture History*, volume 31, pp. 129-205, p. 136.
[108]Dimity was a white cotton textile which was relatively inexpensive and washable. It was fashionable, particularly for bedrooms, in the early nineteenth century. Mary Schoeser and Celia Rufey (1989), *English and American Textiles: 1790 to the Present*, New York: Thames and Hudson, p. 18.

For other rooms in the house Newton provided items in a more piece-meal fashion; chairs, curtains and carpet for the drawing room in July 1798 and mahogany gothic back chairs for the dining room also in July and more bedroom furnishings in August. The curtains for the dining room were finally sent in August 1799. The late arrival of the curtains seems to have been caused by a problem in settling their fabric and design, this and other details of the negotiations between customer and tradesman being revealed in a series of letters. Descriptions of items were sent to Newton who made up 'Patterns' which were sent as samples for Boulton to choose from and the unwanted ones to be returned.

While demonstrating the difficulties of obtaining goods to order these bills and letters also reveal the lengths that a tradesman had to go to for a customer. Making up items as 'Patterns' and sending furniture about the country was time consuming, costly and risked damage to expensive items. Boulton appears to have had a distinct idea of what he wanted, including quite original features such as the window curtains for the dining room to match the painted pillars in the same room. (Boulton had advice about the furnishing of Soho from Mr Dixon[109] who appears to have acted as an interior decorator.) By acquiring good quality goods from an élite maker and taking an active role in the selection process, Boulton was demonstrating an awareness of fashion and an ability and self confidence to negotiate with the maker, to acquire interpretations of fashionable goods to suit his own taste and requirements. Boulton's bills record at least one purchase of a current design publication; in 1790 he was billed by George Richardson for volumes 1-4 of 'A New Work in Architecture' priced at £2.2.0.[110] Boulton was in touch with artists, architects and

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[109]Cornelius Dixon's background is not known. Dixon did some of the buying on Boulton's behalf and he painted the pillars in the dining room. A letter which makes clear Dixon's part in deciding the colour of the curtains is in BRL, MBP Correspondence Box 'N', number 74.

[110]BRL, MBP 469. Thornton references Richardson's publication as *New Designs in Architecture*, 1792. It would seem that Boulton was buying this direct from the author and in separate parts before it was published as a complete volume. Thornton (1984), p. 140.

designers for his own business purposes and this must have given him an increased awareness of fashion.

Boulton was in a position to entertain at his home people of a high social standing. The furnishing of his home in an appropriate manner for entertaining would have been important for his business activities, as well as for purely socialising. Indeed it is difficult to divorce the two in Boulton's case, for example the Lunar Society meetings were held at his house which certainly must have combined business and pleasure. The display of his ormolu wares in his own home no doubt acted as a discreet advertisement for them. It was perhaps in this way that Boulton saw goods that he liked when he visited the home of James Newton, who displayed the furniture that he made in a domestic setting. This is demonstrated by the reference in one of Newton's letters to a chair that he was sending to Boulton, describing it as the one 'which you saw at my house'.[111] A tradesperson displaying goods to prospective customers in their home was probably only feasible in an urban setting and with expensive items sold in relatively small numbers to wealthy customers. Tradesmen and customer being on a sufficiently intimate footing for the tradesmen to invite the customer into their home. Weatherill does not make this point and theorists who propound the conspicuous consumption theory also do not give any weight to the notion, that middling sort homes might also have acted as an advertisement for their owners, as being credit worthy, of their refined taste etc. Such an advertisement would have helped their business lives rather than merely showing off wealth.

Turning now to Matthew Boulton's children, Ann and Matthew Robinson a continuation of similar patterns can be discerned but fashionable awareness is reinforced.

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[111]BRL, MBP Correspondence Box 'N', number 70. Cox speculates on tradesmen using their homes in this way but the sources used here give firm evidence of the practise. Nancy Cox (2000), *The Complete Tradesmen: a Study of Retailing 1550-1820,* Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 135-9.

Matthew Robinson Boulton

Matthew Robinson Boulton spent less time at Soho instead dividing his time between London, Birmingham and his other home, Tew Park, in Oxfordshire. The surviving bills and correspondence suggest some of his family's preoccupations in the furnishing of Soho House.

The one surviving order from a London cabinet maker was for a very complete set of curtains from William Stephens in Piccadilly, in 1812.[112] Stephens was an upholsterer and cabinet maker who attracted an important and extensive patronage and was included in Sheraton's list of master cabinet makers, in his publication of 1803, *The Cabinet Director*.[113] Boulton's curtains were in blue cotton with blue and black 'twisted line' fringe and tassels and 'three large brass cornices with five burnished gold ends for do. six brass pulley rods and iron fixings'. The use of plain fabric with contrasting fringe and tassels was fashionable for the period.[114] The effect was also heightened by the order including two matching silk and velvet bell pulls. The total order for the curtains came to the considerable amount of £31 11s 6d.

No other orders or bills survive for London makers although Matthew Robinson Boulton is known to have patronised George Bullock, in c. 1817, a fashionable and accomplished cabinet maker, working in London by this date.[115] While no other London orders for Soho House survive the correspondence between Mrs Wilkinson and Mr Westley reveals further aspects of the use of London for objects and materials for the family's home in Birmingham. Mrs Wilkinson was Mrs Boulton's sister and acted as housekeeper for the family. Mrs Wilkinson corresponded on a regular,

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[112]BRL, MBP 469.
[113]Beard and Gilbert (1986).
[114]F.M. Montgomery (1984), *Textiles in America 1650-1870*, New York: W.W. Norton, p. 64.
[115]A set of bedroom furniture was made for Boulton's house, Tew Park in Oxfordshire, which is in the collection at Aston Hall. The furniture is made in Oak, limed oak and holly and dates from c. 1817 (Bullock died in 1818). Accession number BMAG (1987M54).

sometimes daily, basis when the family were in London or at Great Tew, with Mr Westley, Boulton's agent at Soho. Every detail of housekeeping was conveyed in these letters; concerning the servants, the garden and the house interior. Numerous letters show that the family preferred to purchase goods in London rather than in Birmingham. For example in May 1838 Mrs Wilkinson wrote concerning the measuring of rooms so that wallpaper could be bought in London. A few days later she wrote to tell Mr Westley that he had made a mistake in calculating the fabric for recovering a sofa in Mr Boulton's study. She asked him to do it again so that they could purchase the fabric and trimmings in London. The most telling comment was in a letter dated 1837. Some repair work was needed on Mrs Boulton's bed and Mrs Wilkinson requests a sample of 'the trimmings or fringe for Mrs Boulton's Bed....and send with it a little bit of the lining now redipt as Mrs Boulton is particular as to colour'.[116] The correspondence makes it clear that Matthew Robinson Boulton and his wife were particular about the furnishings in their home and used London makers to get the quality they wanted but also to acquire items, even quite minor items, that they wanted to get just right.

The work done in Birmingham seems to be less exacting, although dealing with some of the best tradesmen, such as Hensman, Smallwood and Harris. Birmingham tradesmen were mostly used to do servicing work and the few items that were purchased from them were for children and servants' rooms.[117]

Ann Boulton

The degree of fashionable consumption revealed in Ann Boulton's homemaking is perhaps more surprising than her brother's. Ann was somewhat disadvantaged in her homemaking being unmarried, middle-aged and a semi-invalid when she set up home

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[116]BRL, MBP 438. Letters dated 19/5/1838, 22/5/1838 and 3/7/1837.
[117]10 orders survive dated 1813-1826, BRL, MBP 469, 447, 474, 468.

in about 1819[118] at Thornhill a house near Soho. Despite such disadvantages the bills for Ann Boulton demonstrate that she had inherited a position in society along with an income from her father and that she used these to participate in fashionable consumption; she had access to printed sources, designers and élite London producers and showed discernment in her use of local suppliers.

The main source of information concerning Ann's access to printed sources and professional designers is her employment of Richard Bridgens on a number of occasions. Bridgens was an architect, artist and furniture designer who had worked with the prestigious George Bullock in London. After Bullock died in 1818, Bridgens set up an architectural practice in Birmingham working for James Watt, on the refurnishing of Aston Hall.[119] However, by 1825 Bridgens had moved back to London through lack of commissions. It was perhaps through James Watt that Ann Boulton became acquainted with Bridgens' work. Ann Boulton used Bridgens to produce a number of designs for curtains and furniture in 1820 and 1822:[120]

Coloured designs for the arrangements of Drawing room at Thornhill	5.05.00
2 Do. Do. of verandas	2.10.00
Do. ornaments for Bed cornice and commode for window	0.07.00
Designs for Celleret, 2 fenders, Sofa Cabinet, alteration of chair, flower stand, Dining room curtains, full scale drawings &c.	6.06.00
To 2 Numbers of Costume	1.01.00

The last itemised *Costume* magazine is noteworthy. Ann would have had access to her father and brother's libraries, but this purchase also shows that she kept up to date with the latest fashions through magazines.

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[118]The house had been purchased from James Watt, although exactly when is not known. Between 1809, when her father died, and 1819 Ann Boulton seems to have lived with her brother at Soho. James Watt leased Aston Hall from 1819 and Ann seems to have moved into Thornhill after his departure. Virginia Glenn (1979), 'George Bullock, Richard Bridgens and James Watts' Regency Furnishing Schemes', *Furniture History*, volume 15, pp. 54-67, pp. 54 and 63.
[119]Jane Turner (ed.) (1996), *The Grove Dictionary of Art,* London: Macmillan, p. 806.
[120]BRL, MBP 479.

London orders for furniture for Thornhill were from good and even prestigious suppliers; Gillow,[121] Welstead, Morant and Dowbiggin.[122] Some of these orders were for complete rooms and involved large sums of money. In 1819 the London branch of Gillows supplied her with numerous items of furniture for a bedroom 'stained to imitate rosewood' with chintz covers for chairs and the bed hangings. In addition there was a Brussels carpet, a bottle of polish with instructions for use, 7 pieces of paper for the walls and 'Our Man's time at your house fitting up a Canopy bed, fixing bedsteads &c 3 days'.[123] The whole order came to £126 8s. Another complete bedroom was ordered from James Welstead in 1819, this one had a four post bedstead with mahogany carved pillars, a wardrobe and chest of drawers also in mahogany with carving, the textiles were blue cotton. In 1820 Welstead supplied dining room furniture, dining table, sideboard and 12 chairs with red morocco seats, all in mahogany. The total bill from Welstead was for £207 7s 9d.[124]

Acquiring goods from top London suppliers might have been a daunting task for Ann, perhaps her brother helped. She also had advice from a friend; a four page list of suppliers in London exists with names and addresses for furniture and furnishings with their specialities specified.[125] Ann took the advice of this friend and purchased a number of items from people on the list; carpets from Pickards, on the corner of Finsbury Square, floor cloth from Smith and Baber, in Knightsbridge, and a mahogany swing dressing glass from Baker's of Margaret Street.[126] Baker came with

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[121] Gillows had many aristocratic and gentry customers by this period, they had branches in Lancaster (for supplying northern England) and London (which supplied customers in the south). Although extensive records survive for the firm it is outside the remit of this research where the emphasis is on local suppliers.

[122]Thomas Dowbiggin - 'probably the most highly reputed and successful cm of the 2nd quarter of the 19th century.....He was patronized by the Royal Household and some of the most important families of the country'. George Morant - 'interior decorator, cm, carver and gilder (1790-1839)' with a shop in New Bond Street, he 'applied successfully for Royal Appointment at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign'. Biographical material from Beard and Gilbert (1986).

[123]BRL, MBP 479.

[124]BRL, MBP 479.

[125]BRL, MBP 481. The writer only uses initials (indecipherable) but the informal comments suggest it was written by a friend or relative rather than a tradesperson.

[126]BRL, MBP 479.

the recommendation that 'I understand He was a principal assistant to the late Mr Bullock'. So apart from the major orders from the prestigious suppliers she also shopped around.

Ann Boulton was also sure enough of what she wanted to return goods that did not meet with her approval; she returned a pembroke table to Welstead who sent another allowing her 10s deduction since the one returned had 'more work' in it.[127] A number of goods were also returned to a Birmingham cabinet maker, Masters, in 1819 when she first began homemaking in earnest and was perhaps still working out the best local people to deal with; there were no further bills for Masters. Ann was on safer ground with Smallwood (a leading Birmingham cabinet maker and used by her father) and Hensman in New Street, an old and well established firm.

Less clear cut were Ann's dealings with Day and Barnsley. Neither appear in any trade directories as cabinet makers or upholsterers. Day supplied a large number of items and did servicing work, probably for servants rooms i.e. wardrobe bedsteads. Barnsley, however, was entrusted with fitting up the curtains that Bridgens had designed. It is not clear who made these curtains but they appear to have been made in London and sent down by carrier. This was very much a provincial compromise to avoid the expense of a London supplier sending someone down to fit up the curtains proficiently.[128]

The local supplier that Ann Boulton used most extensively was Elizabeth Cooke, Upholsterer in Canon Street, just off New Street. Cooke did a range of work for Ann but mostly servicing the textile elements of her furnishings. Despite the numerous occasions and the long lists of work done by Cooke her bills were only for small

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[127]BRL, MBP 479.
[128]The quoted incidence of Gillows sending a man to put up a canopy bed was exceptional.

amounts of money. The use of female upholsterers will be dealt with more extensively in Chapter 7 on Gender.

Briefly to summarise the pattern for the three Boulton households; the main elements of a number of rooms were obtained from London. As well as wood furniture all three members of the Boulton family went to the extra expense of London draperies which would have avoided an amateur note in the main rooms. These rooms were added to with individual items, sometimes from London but also from Birmingham; therefore some local goods were present in the main rooms of their houses. The better Birmingham makers[129] were thought acceptable for many items. In addition numerous mundane items were purchased for bedrooms and servants' rooms and servicing work, was carried out by Birmingham people. Repairs to furniture might be for any room but most of the work on textiles by Birmingham tradespeople seems to have been for bedrooms.

It is clear that the Boultons made distinctions about the work they had done, they particularly made sure that their main rooms; the rooms used for entertaining, presented good quality, well made goods, to fashionable design. Birmingham offered a wide selection of tradesmen and levels of expertise but still for the most fashionable and expert work the Boulton's felt the need to go to top London suppliers and were prepared to pay for the service. The Boultons were well informed about design and fashion, mixing with and even employing artists and architects for their own business; they were informed by printed sources, viewing the goods in London shops and in the homes of the élite in society. They operated in society on the level where fashion was important and therefore having fashionable interiors themselves was part of their identity. This can be seen to have increased by the second generation with Matthew Robinson Boulton leaving no evidence of purchases of a traditional nature as was the case with his father. Even Ann, a single woman and

[129]Almost all situated in Area 1 in Birmingham, as described in Chapter 2.

semi-invalid, demanded a higher level of fashion than her father. A number of things were at work here; no doubt the Boulton's felt more secure in their social position by the second generation as evidenced by Boulton jnr. having a large country house. Also, as indicated earlier in this chapter, people became more informed about fashionable goods, and, Birmingham had changed considerably by the 1820s; socially and culturally there was a different atmosphere in which to create a fashionable home.

As the second generation of Boultons became more demanding, so the hierarchy among Birmingham tradespeople became clearer with a few offering superior work. However, Birmingham could not compete with London. The Boultons had to go to London for some orders, they also supplied local people with materials obtained in London and patterns and directions produced by fashionable designers. It must be remembered that Bridgens could not succeed in business in Birmingham due to the lack of customers willing or able to employ him.

Birmingham as a commercial centre was growing all the time during the period under consideration and was quite a different place by 1860 to the town that Matthew Boulton had known sixty years earlier. Increasingly therefore Birmingham became the town in the West Midlands that middling customers resorted to if their local suppliers were not sufficient and a trip to London was not possible. It is this use that can be demonstrated by a brief set of orders, by Henry Wace of Shrewsbury, from a furnishing draper in 1861-2.[130]

Shrewsbury

Henry Wace was a solicitor living in Shrewsbury. He lived with his retired father and his brother, also solicitors, and his brother's family. This professional

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[130]BRL, MS 1081/1-8.

background places him in the Higher rank bracket. Wace was able to shop around for goods but he displayed a keen frugality and care about the furnishing of his home despite the role it no doubt played in the important socialising connected with his and his brother's work.

The evidence for Wace's dealings with Eld and Chamberlain, of Union Street, Birmingham, consist of a few receipts and a catalogue. 'Rec'd 1861' is written on the cover, with annotated lists of goods and comments. Wace seems to have used the catalogue to note down items of interest and perhaps visited the store to view goods and note down prices and then took the catalogue home to discuss possible purchases with his family. Wace was a careful man as befits a solicitor. For example on the bottom of a letter from Eld and Chamberlain, telling him they had dispatched some carpets to him by rail, Wace had noted '17 March They arrived but no invoice with them'. Not deterred by their inefficiency Wace noted on the reverse of this letter that he had ordered a carpet of the same sort, but a different size, two days later. A list of items is written down inside the catalogue and beside some walnut furniture Wace noted the comment 'I liked these' and on the reverse of a piece of a legal document Wace noted down the sizes and prices for items for a 'Dressing Room' a 'Servants Room' and for a 'Bath Room'. Beside a note for a 'Lily Pattern hearth rug' Wace noted 'My Room carpets are all dark now'. But on a list of prices for Brussels and Turkey carpets, in which he carefully makes a distinction between Turkey carpets and Turkey Pattern which is 'not real Turkey', Wace noted at the bottom 'I think Eld and C very dear'.

Wace shows himself to have been a knowledgeable customer who knew about the goods he was purchasing and he had ideas about the style and colours he wanted in his home. He also knew that large furnishing drapers, like Eld and Chamberlain, provided a good choice with regard to the size of stock, its quality and fashionableness. That Birmingham surpassed Shrewsbury by this date was probably

the reason that he resorted to Birmingham shops to obtain carpets and items of furniture. However Wace was perhaps reluctant to pay for the level of fashion that Birmingham could offer. While the evidence is slender it is tempting to see Wace as representative of a county town professional; intelligent, with reasonable income but with cautious consumption habits. The Boultons and Wace both come into the category of Higher rank middling sort. The Boultons however, were manufacturing entrepreneurs and were perhaps as dynamic as the town in which they lived. To what extent the Boultons and Wace may have been influenced by social status, rather than location will be will be dealt with in Chapter 5 on Social Status, when divisions within the Higher rank will be discussed.[131]

Stone and Longton

The level of provision available to customers in Stone and Longton was distinctly provincial compared to that on offer in London or in Birmingham; even Birmingham in the early nineteenth century. Customers in these locations can be examined through the account book of John Foden.[132] By using an account book of goods being supplied by one maker to many customers, this section is doing the reverse of the section on the Boultons. The Stone and Longton consumers can only be seen in their limited dealings with Foden; we do not know what they bought elsewhere. Still this account book offers insights into how consumers in different locations behaved when making homemaking choices.

John Foden kept his account book between 1820 and 1866 although the later entries were less full than the early ones, perhaps suggesting that he was winding down his

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[131]Only Ann Boulton can be used in the Tables in Chapter 5 since it is only her home for which an inventory survives but examples of other manufacturers and professionals will be used.

[132]StRO, MSS 3161. The account book has unnumbered pages and the entries are not in strict chronological order but gathered into groups of entries for customers spanning a few months or a few years at a time.

activities.[133] It is doubtful whether Foden ever thought of himself as a cabinet maker: he refers to himself in a receipt as a 'joiner' and the only time his name appears in a trade directory he was classed as a wheelwright.[134] Nonetheless Foden performed many of the same activities as cabinet makers; making some items of furniture and doing a great number of repairs and servicing to wooden and textile household items. such as putting up and taking down bed furniture, putting down carpets and restuffing mattresses. He also did painting and decorating. In addition Foden performed general carpentry, joinery and wheelwrighting work, with the latter coming into more prominence during the 1830s and 1840s. The emphasis on making and repairing wheels, carts and wagons coincided with his move to Longton in the Potteries although he still continued to perform the variety of services outlined above.

Foden's customers ranged from Viscount Granville,[135] a few gentlemen, some Higher and a great many Lower rank middling sort; tradespeople of various sorts and shop keepers. The two towns also differed; Stone was a rather quiet market town with little if any furniture making provided, while Longton had a rapidly growing population, albeit mainly working class, and a growth in furniture provision from just the same period that Foden moved there.

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[133]Foden wrote a list of his own and his brothers' and sisters' dates of birth on the inside cover of his account book, he was born in 1793.
[134]John Foden, Wheelwright, Market Street, Stone. *Post Office Directory of Birmingham with Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire* (1854), London: Kelly.
[135]His home was Stone Park, Staffordshire, and his family were related to the Duke of Sutherland. Edward Walford (1879), *The County Families of the United Kingdom*, London: Hardwicke and Bogue.

Table 4:2 Furniture tradespeople in Longton and Stone 1818-1850.

Longton	1818	1834	1850
Cabinet Makers	1	3	4*
Upholsterers	0	0	4*
Chair Makers	3	2	1
Carvers & Gilders	0	1	0
Furniture Brokers	0	0	0

* These were the same 4 tradespeople.

Stone	1818	1834	1850
Cabinet Makers	0	0	0
Upholsterers	0	0	0
Chair Makers	2	1	0
Carvers & Gilders	0	1	0
Furniture Brokers	0	0	0

It is probable that Foden went to Longton in the hope of more work and a better income. Much of the wheelwright work he did there was for people involved in the pottery industry. Foden's account book reveals how different customers used this tradesman over a period of 40 years; of particular interest here is when middling rank people chose to employ him to do more than basic carpentry and joinery. A summary of Foden's work will suggest some trends in furniture consumption and homemaking strategies and a differing situation between Stone and Longton.

Between 1820 and 1830 Foden worked for people in Stone and the surrounding countryside. As seen in Table 4:5 Stone had no furniture makers, apart from a few chair makers and one carver and gilder, recorded in the trade directories selected during the period 1770-1860. Although this does not mean that no others existed it certainly points to poor provision for furniture making and selling in the town. It is perhaps for this reason that Foden carried out such varied work, including some furniture making, even though his training had probably been as a joiner and wheelwright. Smaller towns that could not support a range of traders would have encouraged such diversification. Knell makes this point about the crossovers in

woodworking skills and quotes Adam Smith as saying '"A country carpenter deals in every sort of work that is made of wood....[he] is not only a carpenter, but a joiner, a cabinet-maker and even a carver."'[136] But such goods lacked fashionable status in 1776 when Smith was writing. This was even more the case in the 1820s. Therefore even if Foden was a good workman it must be assumed that his furniture making skills would have been inadequate to satisfy discerning customers. The few high status people that he did work for only employed him to do fairly menial work in service areas of the house, or at best, in bedrooms. For example Viscount Grenville employed him in March 1827 'repairing Chamber floors and door 11s'. Foden did rather more for H. Wheatly Esq.[137] in 1827, for example:

Aug to puting up 2 sets of Bed furniture tacks	00.02.00
to puting Bells in order finding Copper Wire	00.02.06
to puting up Stall in Stable finding Nails	00.01.00
to Repairing Coach house Doors	00.01.06
to puting down Carpets in Parler tacks	00.01.06

When occasionally Foden recorded making an item of furniture it was always for Lower rank middling people or below. For example in 1828 he recorded; 'to new set of Tent Bedstids.....1.15.0, 2 forms do. 9 feet long each.....9.0' for Miss Marshall, a milliner in Stone who gave Foden an 'old Cupboard' worth 10s as part payment. Bedsteads, as mentioned in Chapter 2, were considered the lowest end of the furniture making hierarchy and forms were traditional items of furniture. Similarly, when materials were mentioned they were invariably oak or deal rather the fashionable woods such as mahogany. Doing mainly servicing of furniture or making basic items of furniture in common, unfashionable woods fits in with Foden's

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[136]David Knell (1992), *English Country Furniture: The National and Regional Vernacular 1500-1900*, London: Barrie and Jenkins, p. 24.
[137]Possibly 'H. Wheatley, Solicitor, Stone'. *Staffordshire General and Commercial Directory*, Manchester: Parson and Bradshaw, 1818.

profile as a joiner who could turn his hand to other wood working skills if required and sometimes only charge one shilling a day for his labour.[138]

What is surprising is the high number of such jobs Foden carried out for middling people. William Dixon Esq.[139] employed Foden between 1822 and 1827 at his home in Stone and at various properties that he owned. While property owning suggests a good income and social status, he still entrusted Foden with work on important items of furniture, for example:

Slicing Mahogany Bed Pillars	0.03.06
2 Days repairing Bureau and Book case finding Mahogany and Deal Board to back and feet Do. Scowering Puting on locks and new furniture	0.08.06
To making Paper tops for Beds and Puting down stair Carpets	0.01.09

The paper coverings were presumably to catch dust on top of the bed textiles.[140] Mr Dixon's house seems somewhat lacking in that he only had a 'Small Parler' and a 'Front Parler'; a more fashionable interior would have been suggested by a dining room and drawing room. During 1825-6 Mr Dixon spent £21 employing Foden to do work at his house. Therefore, despite a good income and some good quality furniture his house does not appear to be fashionable and he appears to have been content to compromise still further, by employing a joiner to do quite extensive cabinet servicing work.

William Beech was another customer who employed Foden on numerous occasions, at his house, at his drapers shop and at properties that he owned, throughout the

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[138]These were low wages for the time, for example in 1779 'The head carpenter was at this time the highest paid of the outdoor staff at Erdigg: Edward Prince was receiving 1s 6d' a day. Merlin Waterson (1993), *The Servants' Hall,* London: National Trust, p. 56.

[139] 'William Dixson Esq., Walton'. *Staffordshire General and Commercial Directory* (1818), Manchester: Parson and Bradshaw.

[140]In 1776 Susanna Whatman included in her list of housemaid's duties, taking the papers off the tops of beds twice a year. S. Whatman (1992), *The Housekeeping Book of Susanna Whatman*, with an Introduction by Christina Hardyment, London: Random Century and National Trust, p. 37.

period covered by the account book. It is even possible that Beech's move to Longton[141] prompted Foden to do likewise. Again a good income is suggested by Beech's trade and his property owning but his dealings with Foden reveal unfashionable interiors and compromise. In 1828 Foden recorded repairing an oak dining table for 2s 6d; oak would not have been considered smart for this important item of furniture. It was still the custom to remove the cloth and place the desert onto the polished surface of the table, which should have been made of mahogany.[142] Similarly there were a number of references to stencilling rooms including, in 1826, the 'Sitting Room' which was presumably the main room. Although wallpaper did not come down in price until the 1840s it was fashionable and readily available by the 1820s; stencilling would have appeared out-moded and rural. To reinforce this image, again in 1826, Foden recorded 'Coloring house and Pasage Green.....10.0', which appears to be a reference to a room as a house or houseplace, a term that had gone out of usage by the nineteenth century.

Although it is possible that Foden was recording terms that he used rather than his customers, such anachronistic terms all point to a lack of fashionable knowledge. A further example reinforces this point. In 1831 Foden recorded work for 'Mr Thomas Stevens Gent, Stonefield' (a hamlet just outside Stone). 'to work at house slapdashing Parler finding coler &c.....12.0, paint for Window and Gates & Colers left for slapdashing house Place.....4.0'.[143] Slapdashing in the OED is given as a

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[141]Trade directories after this date record Beech with shops in both towns but he and his family seem to have moved to Longton. James Beech & Son, Market Street, Union Market, [Longton] and Stone. James Beech & Son, High Street, Stone. *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Staffordshire* (1834), Sheffield: White. The same directory for 1851 also records addresses in both towns.

[142]Foden repaired mahogany furniture but did not record making furniture in this wood. In 1854 he made a dining table and painted it mahogany, the charge was just 11s 6d. For the importance of a polished mahogany dining table see J.C. Loudon (1839), *Encyclopdia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture,* London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman p. 800. In the early 19th century diaries of Johanna Schopenhauer she described a dinner party; 'The table cloth and everything on it disappear and the beautiful, highly polished table of mahogany shines in front of us.' Johanna Schopenhaur (1988), *A Lady's Travels: Journeys in England and Scotland from the Diaries of Johanna Schopenhaur,* translated and edited by R. Michaelis-Jena and W. Merson, London: Routledge, p. 158.

[143]Most of Foden's painting jobs were for 'whiting', some jobs used stone or buff paint and on a few occasions he used more expensive colours and oil. For a discussion of relative costs of paint see Ian

method of applying paint to resemble paper and the reference comes from a collection of north country colloquial terms collected in the 1820s. This unequivocal reference to a room as a house place and the use of the archaic term slapdashing, clearly categorises both Foden's work and the taste of his customers, in Stone, as old fashioned; Mr Stevens being given the suffix of Gent particularly reinforces this point. Foden's work for the middling sort, particularly those of the Higher rank goes some way to show the existence of regional homemaking and consumption practice in towns such as Stone, which was in the lowest tier of the urban hierarchy and receding rather than rising in the early nineteenth century.

It is not clear exactly when Foden moved to Longton (known earlier as Lane End). The first record of work for a customer in Longton was for 1829 for Mr Watkins of the Golden Lion, but for a few years most of his work was still in Stone. In 1831 he recorded extensive work for Mr Beech the draper, an established customer but the address was for Longton and the work was perhaps connected with his move there.

Between the 9th and 15th of July Foden recorded:

To cleaning and witning sitting room Ceiling front Bed Room Do. Back Room Do. Small Attack finding Witning Size &c	0.06.00
To putting Servants Bedstid up	0.00.09
To cleaning Staircase witning Ceiling Colering Walls Stone from top to bottom	0.08.00
To Witning Ceiling in Kitchen painting walls in Oil Blue and Stone	0.08.00
To repairing young mens Bedstids	0.01.06
To Colering Counting house and front shop Blue helping to clean it	0.07.00
½ day to taking woolen fixtures Down in shop	0.01.10
Myself and a man 1 Day each fitting them up	0.07.04

From that time on the work was for Longton or surrounding area[144] and the emphasis of what work was done and for whom changed dramatically, despite Foden's continued work for Beech.

C. Bristow (1996), *Architectural Colour in British Interiors 1615-1840,* New Haven and London: Yale, p. xi.

[144]Some jobs give a name but no address.

The majority of Foden's work in the 1830s and 1840s was for wheels, carts and wagons and most of the customers were connected with the pottery trade, such as repairing carts for Messrs Hulse and Jaquis, totalling £2.2.3, although he only received £2.0.0, and again cart work for Mr Joseph Allum Pot Seller for which he was paid 18s 6d in cash and a peck of apples worth 1s 4d. Despite these and other rebates and payment in kind Foden was able to raise his daily rate to 4s during this period, a considerable increase on the 1s a day he sometimes charged during the previous decade. On a couple of occasions he referred to customers as 'Esq' but both T.H. Parker and G. Forister only employed him to make carts and wheels; there was none of the domestic work for gentlemen that he performed for Stone customers. However, the emphasis on wheelwright work did not see the end of Foden's general joinery or cabinet making work. In Longton Foden's cabinet making work was conducted in a more business-like manner than it had been in Stone. A number of customers patronised Foden during this period to do extensive work for them; Mr Bradbury at an unnamed hotel, Mr Watkins of the Golden Lion and Mr Russel of the Eagle Inn. Foden seems to have done general maintenance work for these establishments including repairs to furniture when required. In addition Foden worked for Beech and other shop keepers both at their homes and doing shop fitting, so again this included some furniture repairs. In his work for hotels and shops it appears that Foden was an all purpose joiner and decorator that quite large establishments could employ to perform their maintenance work. There were very few odd jobs doing work for individual customers during this period.

The final phase of Foden's working life saw another change in the work he performed. From about 1846 onwards the account book changes; pages from another source are stitched in and the accounts are less frequent perhaps suggesting that his career was dwindling. He continued to do occasional wheelwright work and maintenance work for a number of customers with large premises, for example Mr

Beech and the Golden Lion, plus customers with a number of properties, which presumably they were renting furnished, to tenants. Foden also worked as an undertaker on a few occasions and seems to have been a furniture broker too, recording a number of sales of furniture and textiles. In 1863 he listed repairs, under the name of Mr Beech but for a Mrs Johnson 'ordered at the shop'. Beech was a draper and presumably his business extended to that of furnishing draper. An extension of this kind would coincide with developments in the furniture trade by this date, as suggested in Chapter 2.

The conclusion to be drawn from the changes in Foden's work pattern is that the market was very different in Stone and Longton. While his expertise was valued and found adequate in Stone, even for gentlemen to employ him to repair furniture, in Longton this kind of work was probably carried out by cabinet makers and upholsterers. Foden was better employed in the trades of joiner and wheelwright where his work commanded a higher price. He virtually only performed furniture repair work for those customers for whom he was employed, primarily, to do extensive joinery work. In Longton a more dynamic urban environment prevailed, (although largely working class) so that the better off tradespeople and manufacturers had expectations of more specialised cabinet making skills.[145]

Conclusion

The first part of this chapter looked at how urban historians have sought to grade towns within an urban hierarchy. The prevalence of furniture makers and sellers in the selected West Midlands towns coincided with the urban hierarchy, once the modified version was adopted. It has also been demonstrated that knowledge of

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[145]Some of the last entries in Foden's account book refer to more fashionable work and items of furniture. For example a drawing room is mentioned, green moreen hangings for a bed, an item of furniture called a 'shefiner' is repaired (presumably a chiffonier) and in 1863 he put up 'Paper for houseplace'. By the 1860s Foden was elderly and probably, old fashioned but there are indications that his customers were aware of fashionable trends.

changing furnishing styles was more widely available as the period progressed. Such knowledge was within reach of the middling sort, although not necessarily sufficient income to participate to any great extent in fashionable consumption. Aristocratic consumers demanded the best and often resorted to London makers to purchase their furnishings as in the example of Lord Bradford. Sometimes local makers with exceptional skills were available, as in the example of James Gravenor of Derby, employed by Sir Nathanial Curzon, or Donaldson the carver and gilder in Shrewsbury employed by Lord Berwick. Although as in the example of the library desk at Keddleston, the results were less predictable. The aristocracy had an acute awareness of what was considered 'good taste' and had lifestyles that made a demonstration of their taste important. This was true in both their town houses and their country residences.

Below the level of the aristocracy consumer behaviour was varied and the decisions that governed it were complex. To some extent there appears to have been a connection between the type of town, according to the urban hierarchy, in which the consumer lived and their inclination to be fashionable. Birmingham was high up in the urban hierarchy as a dynamic manufacturing town. The example of consumer habits was provided by the Boultons who displayed a sophisticated knowledge of fashion in their homemaking and had a highly developed sense of the appropriateness of which makers to employ. This increased by the second generation when more items were purchased from London. Whether this was due to increased awareness of fashion or a greater awareness of their social status is not clear. The general pattern of their consumption habits may have derived from, at least in part, their urban social and cultural existence. What is clearly shown by the Boulton's consumption patterns is the level of expertise that Birmingham could support. Birmingham was at the top of the urban hierarchy in the West Midlands by the late eighteenth century and built on this position with an increased provision of good quality furniture makers during the first half of the nineteenth century. It could not however, satisfy the most

demanding of middling sort consumers nor could it support exceptional designers such as Bridgens.

Shrewsbury was also high up in the urban hierarchy as a regional centre but by the outset of the period it was, to some degree, losing its importance due to the growth of Birmingham. The Shrewsbury solicitor, Henry Wace was a discerning customer. Rather than settle for what was available in Shrewsbury, since the town had fewer furniture shops than Birmingham, he purchased goods from a Birmingham furnishing draper. By the early 1860s furnishing drapers were offering a wide selection of goods, some of them ready made, and with catalogues to assist the customer's choice. A furnishing draper offered a safer, more homogenised choice than dealing with a quality cabinet maker. Wace's consumption habits demonstrate that he demanded greater choice, he took extra trouble to gain what he wanted but he was wary of paying too much and purchased ready made rather than bespoke items. To what extent Wace's somewhat conservative consumption habits were influenced by his professional status is difficult to determine. The examples of consumer behaviour for Birmingham and Shrewsbury are somewhat inconclusive since the influence of social status can not be divorced from that of location.

Longton was a smaller and less fashionable town than either Birmingham or Shrewsbury. It began the period at the bottom of the urban hierarchy but that position had begun to change by the time John Foden set up in business there in c. 1831. By this date Longton appeared to offer an urban milieu, albeit less pronounced than more established towns and perhaps offering less potential for development, but one which resulted in customers demanding the skills of cabinet makers and upholsterers, to service their homes, rather than an all purpose joiner like John Foden. By contrast, in the rural market town of Stone, Foden had been in great demand doing precisely that kind of work, for middling sort customers and even a number of gentlemen.

The examples of people purchasing goods for the home from four West Midlands towns are inconclusive since the evidence is fragmentary and deals with small numbers. However, the examples for each of the four towns do provide indications that location continued to influence people in their homemaking. Despite greater knowledge of fashion being available, even at the end of the period, the indications are that the middling sort who lived in towns at the bottom of the urban hierarchy, were less likely to participate in fashionable consumption.

The type of town in which a consumer lived, throughout the period, was probably one factor in forming their propensity to consume and the nature of that consumption. A more conclusive argument concerning the influence of location would require the support of more sources to provide a greater variety of consumers for each location. What has become clearer in this chapter is that location probably worked along side other factors to influence people; that some consumers had a greater awareness of their social and cultural role and the role therefore that their home needed to play.

Chapter 5

Social Status and Consumption

Preserving distinctions in society and the material manifestations of difference through consumption practice has a long history. For example sumptuary laws date back to Athens in 594 BC.[1] Debates on the desirability of greater consumption and its effects on society proliferated in the late seventeenth century in the work of such writers as Dudley North and Nicholas Barbon, followed in the early eighteenth century with Mandeville's controversial publication *Fable of the Bees.* Much of this writing revolved around the possible corrupting influences of the consumption of luxuries and the counter argument of the economic benefits of increased production and trade. While the wealthy were criticised for being avaricious the 'lower classes' were also attacked throughout the eighteenth century, in books and in the press, for their propensity to copy their social superiors. It was believed that increased consumption would threaten the natural social hierarchy, although the eighteenth century commentators were invariably from the upper classes.

The Link Between Social Status and Consumption

The newly emerging social sciences at the end of the nineteenth century produced theories that took a rather different slant on the relationship between the classes and patterns of consumption. The work of Veblen and Simmel was a crucial development in consumption theory and definitely linked consumption with class. The theories propounded by these two sociologists make class and social emulation

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[1]Christopher J. Berry (1994), *The Idea of Luxury: a Conceptual and Historical Investigation*, London: Cambridge University Press, p. 81.

the determining factors that governed consumption and their ideas influenced much of the writing on consumption throughout the twentieth century.

The gist of Veblen's theory[2] revolves around the idea that the most desired form of lifestyle is an aristocratic one with an abundance of wealth and leisure. The middle class, this theory assumes, wished to emulate those above them with displays of material possessions or conspicuous consumption. While some recent literature on theories of consumption has been critical of Veblen his theory still continues to influence attitudes to consumption, particularly when analysing the Victorian period.[3]

The theory put forward by Simmel concerned the idea of 'trickle down';[4] that the propensity to consume particular goods moved down through society. Changing fashions resulted with the upper classes constantly showing their superiority with new goods or styles. This theory has also been influential and the arguments in Braudel, Perkin and McKendrick[5] are based on Simmel. However, some recent consumption theory suggests that both conspicuous consumption and trickle down are too simplistic as explanations of patterns of consumption; for example McCracken and Campbell have called for more subtle interpretations of consumers' intentions.[6]

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[2]Veblen, Thorstein (1994), *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, [1899] Harmondsworth: Penguin.
[3]See for example Thomas Richards (1990), *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle,* London and New York: Verso; Rosalind Williams (1982), *Dream Worlds: mass consumption in 19th century France,* Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press.
[4]G. Simmel (1957), 'Fashion' [1904], *American Journal of Sociology*, number 62, pp. 541-58.
[5]Harold Perkin (1968), *The Origins of Modern English Society*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Fernand Braudel (1973), *Capitalism and Material Life 1400-1800,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; Neil McKendrick, John Brewer & J.H. Plumb (1982), *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, London: Europa.
[6]Grant McCracken (1990), *Culture and Consumption*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; Colin Campbell (1987), *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, Oxford: Blackwell.

The two theories, of conspicuous consumption and trickle down, briefly outlined both suggest that middle class consumption emulated aristocratic material culture.[7] An alternative theory has been developed which suggests that the middle class wished to distinguish themselves from the aristocracy whom they viewed as immoral, therefore creating a distinct material culture that expressed their middle class position. Davidoff and Hall in *Family Fortunes*[8] propounded the idea of a middle class culture of consumption, seeing consumption as yet another manifestation of a distinct middleclassness. Although they treat consumption rather superficially this is an inevitable outcome of their thesis.

Davidoff and Hall offer some stimulating ideas for debate, however, their overarching theory also produces a limiting interpretation. This is due to the notion of differentiation between the middle and upper class depending on the development of a distinct and homogenous middle class. The completeness of this development and its fairly precise siting during the classic industrialisation period goes against, as Wahrman has intimated, the 'recent research, establishing the existence of large and vibrant 'middling' social groups already by the early eighteenth century, if not before'. Wahrman cites Hunt, Smail and Earle's work as examples.[9] Wahrman suggests however, that earlier developments did not result in a distinctive cultural or political force that was recognisably 'middle class' and goes on to argue that such a distinctive outlook did not begin to emerge until after the Reform Bill of 1832.[10] As indicated in Chapter 3 the present study is not attempting to prove the development of a class

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[7]Emulation theory is broadly in line with work that suggests that a middle class emerged in the early nineteenth century but which 'failed' since it ultimately gentrified. See for example Martin Wiener (1981), *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980*, London: Cambridge University Press.

[8]Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall (1987), *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850,* London: Routledge.

[9]D. Wahrman (1995), *Imaging the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-4; P. Earle (1989), *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660-1730,* London: Methuen; J. Smail (1994), *The Origins of Middle Class Culture: Halifax, Yorkshire, 1660-1780,* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press; M. Hunt (1995), *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1660-1750,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

[10]Wahrman (1995), p. 18.

society in the nineteenth century, due to the industrial revolution. Rather what has been stressed here is the gradual evolution of society and the variations which continued to exist throughout the period. Some recent theories of consumption take the view that categories of 'class' are still useful providing that the variables that determine more precisely someone's position in society, rather than a simplistic three tier class system, are taken into consideration; where people lived, their occupation and how this impacted on their view of themselves in society and how others viewed them. Therefore some texts which take as their starting point how such variables influenced peoples' attitudes to material possessions need to be considered.

Nenadic has written about late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Glasgow and Edinburgh, looking for differences and similarities between middle rank households.[11] However Glasgow and Edinburgh were both large cities and relatively close together and therefore do not correspond with the geographical situation in the West Midlands. Furthermore, as Nenadic's article makes clear, there were substantial differences in home making practice between England and Scotland at this period. Nonetheless Nenadic raises an issue that is worth pursuing here. She uses inventories, which exist more extensively for Scotland at this late period, to argue that although Edinburgh had a generally wealthier population than Glasgow, 'the material culture of the home appear to have been broadly similar. The differences were not so much between the cities as between some of the different groups that comprised the middle ranks.'[12] Nenadic found distinctions according to profession; the merchants in both cities indulging in the most 'conspicuous consumption and acquisition of elaborate and symbol-laden possessions' while the professional classes 'were noted for restraint in their patterns of purchasing and display - a form of conspicuous parsimony that is peculiarly associated with the Scottish professions'.[13]

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[11]Stena Nenadic (1994), 'Middle-Rank Consumers and Domestic Culture in Edinburgh and Glasgow 1720-1840, *Past and Present*, number 145, pp. 122-156.
[12]Nenadic (1994), p. 127.
[13]Nenadic (1994), p. 127.

Having established that differences existed between different elements of the middle class, which were reflected in their homemaking, Nenadic then only discusses the broad similarities. Although Nenadic raises this important point she does not fully address it, so the question remains, as to how important cultural affiliations were to homemaking choices.

Another writer to address diversity within the middle class is Rubinstein[14] who has written that there were two middle classes; those involved in commerce and finance and were overwhelmingly London based and the manufacturing and industrial sector who were based in the north of England (Rubinstein placed the West Midlands in the latter sector). Rubinstein sees a link between the commercial and financial based occupations and the 'old society'; they were Anglicans by religion, Conservative in politics and sent their sons to public schools. Rubinstein also notes that the ties between this section of the middle class and the land owning classes were strengthened, through the tendency for the latter to become increasingly involved in London business activities. By contrast Rubinstein found that manufacturing industry produced a middle class that was composed of predominantly Protestant dissenters, many favouring Liberal politics, and 'the number of aristocrats directly concerned with industry or manufacturing, apart from membership on boards of companies exploiting the minerals on their own land, was probably nil.'[15]

Rubinstein's two groups need to include sub sections or offshoots when applied to the West Midlands. Although the Birmingham manufacturers fit well into his second section of the middle class, further refinement is required to take into account such middle rank people as the Shrewsbury professional or the small market town shop keeper. Having used the two tier system suggested by Davidoff and Hall that placed

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[14]W.D. Rubinstein (1977), 'The Victorian Middle Classes: Wealth, Occupation, and Geography, *The Economic History Review*, volume 30, pp. 602-623.
[15]Rubinstein (1977), p. 621.

people in the Higher rank or Lower rank of the middle class, it is now desirable to grade their status further according to Rubinstein's groupings. What is important about Rubinstein's theory to the present discussion is that it suggests cultural affiliations which, it could be argued, would affect consumption patterns and generally impact on people's relationship to material goods.

Therefore the source material to be considered in this chapter, will be interrogated with the above ideas in mind to see if patterns emerge; over time and place and to see if emulation of élite consumption is evident or a distinct middle class style or whether variations in consumption emerge, that are linked to divisions within the middle class. According to Tiersten, it is by examining the differences and the similarities that we can arrive at an understanding of the 'chief characteristics and guiding ethos of the [bourgeois] group' and 'the role played by consumption in defining class boundaries.'[16] Tiersten has written in favour of a distinct middle class identity, but the differences and similarities might also show that some sections of the middle class were closer in attitude, or more influenced by, gentry and aristocratic outlooks.

Before moving on to look at examples, the source material and the criteria for allotting status to goods needs to be defined. The examples for this chapter are derived from lists of the contents of houses. Approximately half are inventories, some were made for probate while others were made for reasons which are not always clear. Inventories do not exist in great number for the period so the lists in house sale particulars have also been used; printed catalogues or briefer newspaper advertisements and a few hand written lists (from which the printed catalogues would have been derived). The advantage of using lists of the contents of houses is that this one type of source offers examples from the greatest number of places and covers a

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[16]Lisa Tiersten (1993), 'Redefining Consumer Culture: recent literature on consumption and the bourgeoisie in Western Europe, *Radical History Review,* number 57, pp. 116-159, p. 118.

wide range of people. All types of list have their limitations. In inventories objects were described briefly often omitting information, for example the material an object was made from. They almost never commented on the style of an object. Age, quality and condition were also often ill defined. All of these aspects about objects are important for judging fashionability, and the 'appropriateness' of an object in a particular context. However the wording and manner of listing often infer attributes on the goods. In addition, inventories were usually listed by named rooms which offers information about usage and meaning. House sale particulars were generally far less detailed than inventories although they sometimes followed an inventory style often beginning with the bedrooms, followed by the main rooms and ending with the kitchen. These lists missed out some of the details to be found in inventories, but in their favour, is the fact that what they chose to include is very revealing; what was considered particularly desirable at the time, they tell us the best that a house had to offer. For a poor household the items in a kitchen or brewhouse were listed whereas for a grand house these would be taken for granted with a general comment. House sales also used adjectives such as fine, elegant and fashionable that help to grade the objects.[17]

Although the household lists to be used are problematic as sources they can all, in their different ways, be seen as reliable evidence of what homes contained. Inventories were often legal documents where accuracy was required even when made by ordinary citizens.[18] In the case of house sale particulars these were made by professional auctioneers and appraisers who would have been good judges of the goods in which they dealt.

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[17]Berg found similar points in favour of using wills over inventories; 'The bequests made in wills, by contrast, provide a much more selective picture of an individual's possessions. The goods mentioned in bequests were singled out for attention by the individual, and thus endowed with some emotional, familial or material value.' Maxine Berg (1996), 'Women's Consumption and the Industrial Classes of Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of Social History,* volume 30, number 2, pp. 415-434, p. 418. In the case of house sale advertisements the emphasis is not that of the individual but rather the auctioneers, professional opinion of a good's importance.

[18]Nancy and Jeff Cox (1984), 'Probate Inventories: the Legal Background', Part 1, *The Local Historian*, volume 16, number 1, pp. 133-145, p. 136.

Ownership and Use of Objects in the Home

The household lists will be scrutinised for: the general level of fashion and quality of the objects listed, analysis of individual items, the listing of rooms that might suggest use and, the naming of rooms which might reflect cultural developments in the organisation of the home. It will be most useful to consider a few inventories of aristocratic and gentry homes first to offer a comparison for the bulk of the inventories, which fall into the Higher rank and Lower rank middle classes.

Table 5: 1 Aristocratic and Gentry Homes

Name	Address	Date
Richard Grevis Esq.	Moseley Hall, Kings Norton	1759
Edward Farmer Esq.	Caldecot Hall, Nuneaton	1770*
James Wakeman Newport	Hanley Castle	1785
Sir Herbert Pakington	Westwood Park	1786
Hon. Eylen Dormer	Welbourne	1796*
John Staunton Esq.	Kenilworth	1811
R.B.W. Browne Esq.	Caughley Hall	1811*
Col. Egerton	Severn Hills	1814*
Fairfax Moresby Esq.	Stowe Hill, Lichfield	1815*
Thomas Jesson Esq.	Charlement Hall, West Bromwich	1819*
Lady Tara	The Grange, Ellesmere	1831*
Hon. & Rev. A. Grey	Hams Hall	1834*
Charles Bowyer Adderley	Hams Hall	1837
Francis Blythe Harries	Benthall Hall & Brosely Hall	1844-48
Samuel Hyam Esq.	Spring Hill House, Birmingham	1849*

* denotes newspaper advertisement of house sale, Charles Bowyer Adderley details are from a list of goods sold in a house sale, the others are inventories.

Level of Fashion and Quality of Objects listed

All of these homes were characterised by good quality furniture and furnishings. Substantial pieces of furniture, such as bedsteads and sideboards were frequently stated as being made of mahogany, and bed hangings and window curtains were

damask, chintz and moreen. The inventory with most evidence of superior quality is that of Sir Herbert Pakington.[19] For example one of his many bed chambers, the 'Chintz Room' had a bedstead with:

> mahogany feet post and chints furniture lined with green silk and fringed....
> 2 beautiful japan commodes in laid with gold upon a mahogany stand, and green covers lined
> 6 bamboo elbow chairs and 6 coushons to ditto, and 4 stool ditto, an chints covers and 1 sofe to match, with India mat and 2 boulsters
> A black japan cabenet in laid with gold and glass door stand upon a burnich gilt frame.....

This extract reveals a bed chamber with a co-ordinated scheme that appears to have been in a Chinese style; printed chintz textiles with green silk linings and fringing to complement it, fancy chairs, stools and sofa carved and painted to look like bamboo with chintz textiles *en suite*, and japanned cabinets and commodes. All these elements would have produced an exotic chinoiserie scheme. Therefore not only were individual items of good quality but together they would have produced a sumptuous effect and this was repeated in the various living rooms of the house. A drawing room described as the 'India Paper' room, which presumably referred to a Chinese hand-painted wall paper,[20] had:

> 8 verey rich carved elbow chairs gilt in burni[sh] gold and covered with yallow Genoa damask and brass nails, a large sofa with 2 bolsters too match, ditto 3 long conversation stools to match, ditto serge cases for them all
> 2 very large yellow Genoa damask festoon window curtains lined and fringed, and
> 1 small ditto with carved cornices gilt in burnished gold to ditto...

It must be assumed that some of these furnishings were imported items and some the work of London cabinet makers and upholsterers in order to achieve such quality.

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[19]WRO, BA4739, parcel 1(viii).
[20]The term India paper was often used presumably because such items were brought to Britain by the East India Company. The probability that the Pakington's had chinoiserie decorative schemes is borne out by a visitor in the 1750s describing Westwood having 'something in the Chinese manner'. H. and R. Pakington (1975), *The Pakingtons of Westwood*, Published Privately by the Authors, p. 96.

However it is the particulars for house sales that include most revealing remarks about the origins of certain goods and therefore their implied quality. Some of the house sale advertisements for aristocratic and gentry households refer to goods being London made, for example the *Salopian Journal* lists R.B.W. Browne Esq.'s household goods with the introductory remark that they form 'a splendid Assemblage of Articles, principally supplied from an eminent Upholsterer in London, with specimens of the first excellence' which included:

> A DRAWING ROOM SUITE of elegant French Window Curtains in rich Chintz, lined and fringed with Chairs and Sofa en suite, handsome Pier Tables, painted and varnished, rich burnished Gold Wreath Girandole, with 5 light branches[21]

The wording stressed what was most fashionable in 1811; French draperies and the co-ordinated window curtains and seating. Goods in a house sale were often sold to different customers but the wording *en suite* is a recommendation of their fashionableness even though that level of fashion might not be repeated in the homes of the new owners. Similarly Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* recommended the property of Fairfax Moresby Esq. in 1815: 'Superb Household Furniture of exquisite Wood and Workmanship, the greatest part of which is London made'.[22]

The superfluous adjectives that abound in advertisements at this time might lead one to suspect that these were crude examples of the art and everything offered for sale would be described as 'superb' and 'exquisite', but this was not the case. Newspaper advertisements for the contents of houses used a finely graded vocabulary to suggest, quite precisely what prospective customers might expect. Only the examples of aristocratic and gentry households employed the adjectives found in the quoted examples, whereas more middling households were 'handsome' and 'genteel' and the goods in more lowly homes were simply 'neat' and 'useful'. This presumably worked

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[21] *Salopian Journal,* 24/7/1811.
[22] Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 13/3/1815.

well in advertising terms since every level of good had its market and its respective qualities needed to be communicated to the target audience.

Noteworthy Individual Items

Whereas the image presented in newspaper advertisements were explicit, inventories were slightly more ambiguous. This was presumably because the auctioneers had decided what image to project and only listed items that fitted it. Inventories were more relentless in their enumeration of the contents of rooms, down to the 'fli catcher' in a best bed chamber (Pakington room 3). This minute detail throws up items that go against the general impression of an inventory or the character of a particular room. For example John Staunton's inventory of 1811 listed four living rooms; a Study, a Dining Room, a Stone Parlour and a Drawing Room.[23] The Stone Parlour was less formal than either the dining room or the drawing room. It contained a large oak cupboard which might have held china since this room was followed by a long list of china. Therefore the character of the room may have been a breakfast room used by John Staunton's wife, Anne, as a day time sitting room, particularly since the Study clearly catered for 'male' interests. However, the list of mahogany furniture and turkey carpet, also contained:

Painted pot cupboard
Blunderbus
pair pistols and Cases
2 guns
10 sticks and canes....

The masculine character that prevailed in three out of the four sitting rooms in this house may have been due partly to the predominantly male household; John Staunton, Anne, his second wife and Edward, one of his sons from his first marriage. Perhaps also the organisation of the house reflected old gentry ways of doing things;

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[23]BRL. 397968.

primogeniture favouring the male line and the Staunton's had remained in 'direct male succession' since the mid 15th century. This bias would have been reinforced in the Staunton's case since Anne was the second wife and not the mother of John Staunton's children.[24] There had always been a woman living in the house requiring a day time sitting room; John's first wife, his daughter before her marriage and from at least 1800,[25] Anne his second wife, but the decoration of the house did not cater for feminine tastes. It is particularly important to note that as late as 1811, when interiors were 'softening', Anne Staunton had so little influence in the decoration of her home.

Weatherill claims that the gentry were slow to acquire the new luxuries and tended to adhere to old fashioned homes.[26] There are not enough examples used here to distinguish between the gentry and aristocracy with any certainty. However, some comments can be made about the possible nature of gentry homes using the inventories of Grevis (1759) and Harries (1848) and comparing them to Staunton's home.[27] Richard Grevis died in 1759 and even for this early date his home was somewhat old fashioned in terms of the organisation of the household and of the individual items listed. For example only one of the living rooms, the Great Parlour and two bedrooms, the Great Chamber and Mr Grevis' bed chamber had window curtains listed. Also the Best Parlour and the Great Chamber both had stools listed suggesting the use of seventeenth century furniture.

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[24]John Staunton had previously been married to the mother of his 4 surviving children; 3 sons and 1 daughter. Family details from John Burke (1837), *A Genealogical and heraldic History of the Landed Gentry,* London: Henry Colburn.
[25]The account book was begun in 1800 and refers to Anne from the beginning. It is not known when John and Anne Inge married, however, the IGI records a John Staunton marrying Ann Inge in Coventry in 1788 which was probably the same people. John Staunton was in partnership with Edward Inge of Coventry purchasing a mine in 1789, VCH, *Warwickshire,* volume 8, p. 105.
[26]Lorna Weatherill (1993), 'The Meaning of Consumer Behaviour in Late Seventeent- and Early Eighteenth-Century England', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods,* London: Routledge, p. 210.
[27]PRO, PROB 31 436/91; SRO, 6000/12839(3).

By contrast the inventory of Thomas Harries' home in 1848, although only a rented property, since he had been forced to sell Benthall Hall in 1844, revealed a fashionable home with entirely appropriate contents; mahogany table, sideboard and celleret in the 'Dining Room', curtains and carpets throughout and a sofa and window curtains *en suite* in the 'Drawing Room'. Harries' inventory in 1848 does not accord with Weatherill's findings but more evidence would be required to ascertain whether the trends she noted in the early eighteenth century were no longer applicable by the mid nineteenth century.

The slightly earlier gentry home of the Staunton's, while including a high level of consumption of individual objects, betrayed an old style of arranging a household that was in keeping with Weatherill's ideas. This may well have been linked to Anne's status in the family as the second wife with little say in the organisation of the interior. Her status is revealed in the entries in an account book kept by John Staunton. Although he did not die until 1811 Staunton seems to have been taken ill in 1809 and another person continued the account book. Rather than Anne or a servant, the entries indicate that it was Edward who kept the accounts between 1809 and his father's death in 1811. There were references to giving money to Mrs Staunton, but only small amounts rather than the housekeeping money that her husband had recorded. After John Staunton's funeral one of the last entered expenses was the carriage to take Mrs Staunton to her father's house in Coventry. It is this position in the household, of being subservient to the interests of the men and to the system of primogeniture, that perhaps marked gentry methods that still continued into the nineteenth century and was reflected in the way the Staunton's house was organised.

Listing of Rooms

All the aristocratic and gentry homes looked at had a variety of living rooms suggesting that both front and back, or public and private, activities could have been accommodated. The newspaper advertisements are somewhat uninformative in this respect since they only mention 'front' rooms, but each advertisement had references to two or more rooms and it can be assumed that most of the houses would also have had another parlour for every day use. The inventories are more informative on this matter, with each room listed, and the ordering at least suggests a possible relationship between the rooms.

Several examples can be used to demonstrate different arrangements of homes as suggested by the names given to rooms. In the house of Richard Grevis a somewhat archaic terminology was employed, with an 'Old Kitchen' and 'Old Hall' suggesting an old house and the term 'Great Parlour' was decidedly old fashioned. Although great parlours were used by Gothick revivalists like Walpole at Strawberry Hill in the 1750s[28] it seems unlikely that Grevis was at the height of fashion in using the term.

Perhaps the most noteworthy inventory is also the most illustrious one, that of Herbert Pakington. This house was clearly the largest and grandest of all those examined; out of the 79 rooms listed 9 might be considered living rooms for private or public use. The 'Studdy' and the 'Long Gallery adjoining the Study' seem to have been on the first floor. Then there was the 'India Paper Drawing Room', the 'Dining Room' and the 'Marble Room' one after another in a series of rooms, also a 'Dining Parlur', 'Great Hall', 'Stuco Parlour', and 'Old Hall' again in succession. The ordering might be explained by passages and staircases in between which confuse the progression. The ordering also suggests an old house where rooms had acquired new uses and the hierarchy of rooms had been disrupted. This idea is borne out by the fact that Westwood Park survives; (see Figure 3:1) the central block built c.1598-

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[28]Peter Thornton (1984), *Authentic Decor: the Domestic Interior 1620-1920*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, p. 175.

1600 with wings at each corner, either built at the same time, or as Pevsner claims, added in c.1660-70 and 'conservative for such a date'.[29] No structural alterations were made in the eighteenth century.[30] The Pakington's reluctance or lack of finances to up-date Westwood resulted in a house at odds with current fashions by the 1780s. Instead of the light and spacious classical rooms of newly built grand houses, Westwood retained 'its heavy ceilings, its dark panelling and its latticed windows'.[31] Certain oddities in the organisation of the house are suggested by the inventory list, for example the 'Great Hall' had a billiard table (fashionable in 1786). The 'Crimson Dama[s]k Bed Chamber' appears to have been on the ground floor which would have conformed to seventeenth or earlier eighteenth century arrangements but which had been largely discarded by 1786. What is clear is that the living rooms did not have precise uses and seem to combine elements that were more typical of the earlier eighteenth century than currently fashionable ideas.

Names of Rooms

The impressions that have emerged are further emphasised when the names of rooms are noted in this collection of aristocratic and gentry homes. Apart from the obvious connotations of Herbert Pakington's Long Gallery and Great Hall, some ambiguity has also been referred to in John Staunton's Stone Parlour and its possible character. This is also echoed in some of the early newspaper advertisements that use the old term, dining parlour, for people in 1811 and 1814; R.B.W. Browne and Col. Egerton.[32] Whereas in 1819 and 1831 two people have listed a drawing room, dining room and breakfast room; Thomas Jesson and Lady Tara.[33] This reflected fashionable use and the development of more precise uses for rooms than in the

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[29]N. Pevsner (1968), *The Buildings of England: Worcestershire,* Harmondswoth: Penguin, p. 286. Family research claims the wings were built at the same time as the central block. Pakington (1975), p. 13.

[30]A new kitchen and stable block were built at the back in the 19th century. Pakington (1975), p14.

[31]Pakington (1975), p. 98.

[32]*Salopian Journal,* 11/5/1814.

[33]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 8/3/1819; *Salopian Journal,* 2/11/1831.

eighteenth century. The last dated inventories were predictable in their arrangements for their period. Charles Bowyer Adderley's house sale, in 1837,[34] did not follow a room by room listing and instead seems to reflect the ordering dictated by the house sale, however there were references to furniture for, a dining room, drawing room and breakfast room. And the last dated gentry inventory of Thomas Harries also had a 'Dining Room', 'Drawing Room' and 'Breakfast Parlour'.

All these homes had a variety of good quality objects and a tendency to have suites of furniture and furnishings. All of them had a variety of living rooms that suggest that a high level of entertaining and display would have been possible. Apart from clear differences in levels of wealth there was also demonstrated a development in fashionable usage in the less wealthy as much as in the most illustrious. Over and above this it was clear too that some people clung to old ways of doing things, particularly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century but that a more standard way of organising homes prevailed from c.1820 onwards.

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[34]BRL, Norton Collection (2182) 820 and Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 23/10/1837.

Table 5:2 Higher Rank Middle Class.

No	Name	Occupation	Address	Date
A	Mr Thomas Pemberton	Not known	Birmingham	1770*
B	Mr Samuel Freeth	Not known	Birmingham	1780*
C	Mrs White	Widow	Bridgnorth	1790*
D	Dr. Joseph Priestley	Unitarian minister	Birmingham	1791
E	Rev. Mr Huntley	Minister	Shifnal	1794*
F	Mr Charles Wyatt	Cement manufacturer	Birmingham	1794
G	Alderman Whitwell	Blue merchant	Coventry	1796*
H	Mrs Susanna Seager	Spinster	Kinver	1796*
I	Mr James Slade	Merchant	Oswestry	1796*
J	Mr Durell	Not known	Condover	1798*
K	Mr James Mullock	Farmer	Whitchurch	1804
L	Mrs Ann Fox	Spinster	Cleobury Mortimer	1813
M	Mr Kendal	Farmer	Sedgley	1815*
N	Mr Pratchett	Retired druggist	Birmingham	1824
O	Miss Ann Boulton	Spinster	Birmingham	1829
P	Mr W. Steel	Not known	Wolverley	1830*
Q	Miss Mayor	Spinster	Shrewsbury	1831*
R	Mr David Parkes	Schoolmaster/artist	Shrewsbury	1834*
S	Mr Moore	Farmer	Hagley	1843*
T	Thomas Francis	Not known	Edgbaston	1849*
U	Mr John Loach	Not known	Edgbaston	1849*

In Table 5:2 and 5:3 each consumer is given a letter (for Higher Rank) or a number (for Lower Rank). This enables the individuals to be tracked through Tables 5:4 – 5:6 which show ownership of goods.

Table 5:3 Lower Rank Middle Class.

No	Name	Occupation	Address	Date
1	Francis Law	Butcher	Bridgnorth	1761
2	John Marrian	Farmer	Bobbington	1761
3	Thomas Heeley	Toy maker	Birmingham	1764
4	Soloman Smith	Carpenter	Birmingham	1764
5	Catherine & Hannah Poyner	Spinsters	Bridgnorth	1765
6	Mr Joseph Hunt	Gunsmith	Birmingham	1770*
7	Susanna Marrian	Farmer	Bobbington	1770
8	Humphrey Wyrley	Plater	Birmingham	1770
9	John Crane	Victualler	Birmingham	1772
10	Richard Evason	Farmer	Cardington	1777
11	James Eyken	Cabinet maker & Upholsterer	Wolverhampton	1780
12	Thomas Lovatt	Farmer	Claverley	1786
13	Mr Thomas Shelley	Grocer	Stone	1790*
14	Edward Haines	Inn keeper	Bridgnorth	1794
15	Samuel Cracknell	Buckle maker	Birmingham	1794
16	Thomas Thomas	Farmer	Bobbington	1796
17	Jane Browne	Plumber & glazier	Bridgnorth	1797
18	Edward Whitaker	Inn keeper	Bridgnorth	1798
19	Richard Price	Miller	Allum Bridge	1802
20	Mr Edward Pearce	Baker	Bridgnorth	1810
21	Mr Dorsett	Inn keeper	Darlaston	1815*
22	Mr Avery Homer	Tanner	Birmingham	1834*
23	Jonah Bissell	Metalwares manufacturer	Birmingham	1842
24	Mr Ward	Machinist	Birmingham	1853*

* denotes newspaper advertisement for house sales, Mrs Ann Fox, Jonah Bissell and Mr Pratchett are printed house sale catalogues, all the others are inventories.[35]

Only a few women with a known status or occupation are included. A number of inventories for women have been traced for the period, particularly for Bridgnorth, but they were merely designated by their marital status which makes it difficult to place them in one of the above categories. These women will be considered in Chapter 6 on the Lived Experience.

General Level of Fashion and Quality of Objects

All the Higher rank had quantities of smart furniture, that is, they were made of such woods as walnut and mahogany rather than deal, ash or oak. Also these mahogany

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[35]Most inventories are LJRO probate inventories, all other sources will noted.

and walnut items included substantial furniture, items such as bedsteads. chest of drawers, dining tables, chairs and sideboards rather than merely small items such as trays and tea caddies. The emphasis was on solid and good quality materials rather than extravagant display and exceptional craftsmanship, as seen in some of the gentry examples. This continued to be the case in the nineteenth century inventories for this group. For example Mr Pratchett, a gentleman living in the western suburbs of Birmingham, had a 'Dining Room' in 1824 whose main items consisted of:[36]

> Handsome Kidderminster floor carpet, 14 feet by 12 feet 6 inches
> Set of excellent mahogany chairs with loose hair seats, consisting of eight single and 2 two-arm ones
> Mahogany dining table, with moveable leaf, 5 feet 9 inches by 4 feet
> Pair of mahogany pole fire-screens
> Two mahogany pen trays
> Handsome and convenient mahogany sideboard, with drawers, cellerets & leaves
> Suit of French grey moreen window curtains, with gilt pole cornice.

Few Lower rank people had mahogany furniture listed. Its appearance in a few inventories can be explained by the occupation of the people; a cabinet maker and two inn keepers. Eyken had ready access to quality furniture and inns might be expected to have above average furnishings, although even here native woods predominated with only a single table in mahogany. More unusual was the 1794 example of Samuel Cracknell, a buckle and sugar tong maker. He had a mahogany table and chairs but it is difficult to determine the room in which these belonged because the parlour type objects were sold before the inventory was made and a list of them, with value, was entered at the end of the inventory. Cracknell did have a comparatively high total for his household goods of £91.8.11.

One other Lower rank person had furniture that sounds substantial, Thomas Heeley, a button and toy maker, who had listed a bureau and bookcase and chest of drawers in

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[36]BRL, MS 1749/1(6). The area of Summer Hill was 'a small district of elegant houses built in 1790'. G.E. Cherry (1994), *Birmingham: A Study in Geography, History and Planning*, Chichester: Wiley, p. 43.

bed chambers and a 'Dining table' (as opposed to a table that might have been used for dining). However, no materials were mentioned, and the room use is not at all clear. The early date of Heeley's inventory, 1764, shows that this Birmingham artisan achieved a considerable level of consumption.

While smart furniture among the Higher rank middle class was in abundance these homes failed to achieve the level of completeness in their furnishing schemes that was seen in the aristocratic and gentry homes. Occasionally matching objects were commented on in an inventory but they were invariably in cheaper materials, a common example being drawing room furniture such as sofa and chairs all in horse hair seating to match or perhaps the same objects had cotton covers to match. For example Joseph Priestley's inventory,[37] of 1791, recorded that in the 'Right Hand Front Bed Chamber' there was:

A Mahogany four post Bedstead and purple and white Cotton Furniture, lined with Callico Muslin fringe and Cornishes compleat	25.10.0
Two Purple and White Cotton Window Curtains fringed Laths Lines and Cloak Pins compleat	04.04.0

Throughout this inventory the values seem rather inflated. This is explained by a comment on the inventory by Mr J. Phillips, broker and appraiser, of Fenchurch Street, London, that the 'Valuations are made at the prices and sums it will cost the plaintiff to replace and reinstate every Article.' Priestley's home had been destroyed by rioters.

The Higher rank middling sort are being compared here with people above them and below them; they lacked the suites of furnishings used in aristocratic and gentry houses but they did have mahogany smart furniture that was largely absent in Lower rank middle class homes. Both disparities were probably due to financial

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[37]BRL, 399801 (IIR30).

considerations. Walnut, mahogany and rosewood were expensive woods and furniture made in them would have only been available from the better cabinet makers (rather than the jobbing makers like John Foden). Similarly a matching suite of furniture was a major investment when it was more practicable for most people to buy an occasional piece as their finances permitted.

Noteworthy Individual Items

While major items of good furniture were mostly confined to the Higher ranks, the prevalence of small luxuries was far more evenly distributed amongst the Higher and Lower ranks; throughout the period and for all the places represented. The luxuries that Weatherill looked for have also been included here; saucepans, pewter, earthenware, books, clocks, pictures, looking glasses, window curtains, knives and forks, china, utensils for hot drinks and silver.[38] After Weatherill's cut off point of 1760, these goods continued to be fashionable (except for pewter) and increased production made them more widely available. These goods ought, therefore, to increase in prevalence during the period. Additions have been made to Weatherill's list; mahogany furniture, small items made of mahogany such as tea trays, carpets or carpeting, comfortable seating such as couches or sofas and the use of cotton for furnishings. All these items were becoming fashionable and more widely available during the period. The fashionable goods have been designated 'New commodities' in Tables 5:4 to 5:6. An additional list of goods, 'Old commodities', has been included. These unfashionable items, pewter, delft ware, forms or benches, trenchers and buffets, have been included to ascertain housesholds that retained old fashioned items and out moded methods of organising their homes. This refinement of Weatherill's method will help to define more accurately the nature of the material culture of an individual home. Table 5:4 gives the ownership of goods by status and

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[38]Weatherill (1993).

date, Table 5:5 includes the factor of location. Table 5:6 shows ownership of goods for Lower rank middling sort according to their occupation.

Table 5:4 Ownership of selected goods by status and date.

Object	HR 1760-1810	HR 1810-1860	LR 1760-1810	LR 1810-1860
gross figures	11 (8*)	10 (7*)	19 (2*)	5 (3*)
New commodities				
Saucepans	F	L	3. 11. 14. 16	20. 23. 24
Earthenware	B. D. E. F. K	L. P. R. T. U	2. 11. 12. 14. 16. 17. 18. 19	20. 21. 22. 24
Books	B. D. F. I. J. K	N. P. R. T. U	3. 7. 8. 11	21. 22. 24
Clocks	B. D. F. J. K	L. M. N. R. S	3. 6. 7. 10 .11. 12. 13. 16. 17	20. 21. 23
Pictures	B. D. F. K. R	N. P. T	1. 2. 3. 4. 7. 11	23. 24
Looking glasses	A. B. C. D. F. G. H. I. J. K	L. M. N. P. R. S. T. U	1. 3. .6. 7. 8. 9. 11. 13. 15	20. 21. 22. 23. 24
Curtains	D. E. F. I. K	L. N. U	2. 3. 7. 11. 15. 19	20. 22. 24
Knives & forks	D. F. G	L. N	3. 11	20. 23
China	A. B. C. D. F	L. N. P. T. U	7. 8. 11. 17	21. 22. 23. 24
Hot drink utensils	A. B. D. F. K	L. N. P. T. U	1. 2. 3. 7. 8. 9. 11. 12. 14. 16. 17. 19	23. 24
Silver	A. B. .C. D. H. K	N. T	2. 3. 7. 8. 11. 15. 17	23
Carpets	A. B. D. E. F. G	L. M. N. R. S. T. U	11	20. 22. 23. 24
Sofas	B. D. F. I	N. R. S. T. U	11. 12	22. 23. 24
Cotton furnishings	D. E. F. G. I	L. M. N. P. T. U	11. 15	20. 21. 22. 23. 24
Small mahogany	B. D. E. F. G. H	L. N. R. S. T. U	2. 6. 7. 8. 9. 11. 13. 16. 17	20. 22. 23. 24
Mahogany furniture	A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K	L. M. N. P. R. S. T. U	6. 11. 16. 18	21. 23. 24
Drinking glasses	B. C. D. E. F. I	L. N. P. T. U	3. 7. 11. 12. 14. 15. 17	21. 22. 23. 24
Old commodities				
Pewter	J. K	L. M. N	1. 2. 3. 4. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 14. 16. 17	
Delft ware	F		2. 4. 7. 8. 11. 17	
Forms/benches			7. 10. 16. 17	21
Trenchers			2. 17	
Buffets	F		1. 9	21

- Gross figures are the total number for each category with the number which are derived from newspaper advertisements shown (*). HR = Higher rank and LR = Lower rank middling sort.

Table 5:5 Ownership of selected goods by location, time and status.

Object	Birmingham, Shrewsbury & Wolverhampton – 1760-1810	Birmingham, Shrewsbury & Wolverhampton – 1810-1860	Smaller town & Rural – 1760-1810	Smaller towns & Rural – 1810-1860
Gross figures	**5 (3*)** + 7 (1*)	**6 (4*)** + 3 (2*)	**6 (5*)** + 12 (1*)	**4 (3*)** + 2 (1*)
New commodities				
Saucepans	**F**. 3. 11	23. 24	14. 16	**L**. 20
Earthenware	**B. D. F**. 11	**N. T. U**. 22. 23. 24	**E. K**. 2. 12. 14. 16. 17. 18. 19	**L. P**. 20. 21
Books	**B. D. F**. 3. 8. 11	**N. R. T. U**. 22. 23. 24	**I. J. K**. 7	**P**
Clocks	**B. D. F**. 3. 6. 8. 11	**N. R**. 22. 23. 24	**J. K**. 7	**L. M**. 21
Pictures	**B. D. F. R**. 3. 4. 11	**N. T**. 23. 24	**K**. 1. 2. 7	**P**
Looking glasses	**A. B. D. F. G**. 3. 6. 8. 9. 11. 15	**N. R. T. U**. 22. 23. 24	**C. H. I. J. K**. 13. 17	**L. M. P. S**. 20. 21
Curtains	**D. F**. 3. 11. 15	**N. U**. 22. 24	**E. I. K**. 2. 7. 19	**L**. 20
Knives & forks	**D. F. G**. 3. 11	**N**. 23		**L**. 20
China	**A. B. D. F**. 8. 11	**N. T. U**. 22. 23. 24	**C**. 7. 17	**L. N. Q**. 17
Hot drink utensils	**A. B. D. F**. 3. 8. 9. 11	**N. T. U**. 23. 24	**K**. 1. 2. 7. 12. 14. 16. 17. 19	**L**
Silver	**A. B. D**. 11	**N. T. U**. 22. 23. 24	**C. H. K**. 2. 7. 17	
Carpets	**A. B. D. F. G**. 11	**N. R. T. U**. 22. 23. 24	**E**	**L. M. S**. 20
Sofas	**B. D. F**. 11	**N. R. T. U**. 22. 23. 24	**I**. 12	**S**
Cotton furnishings	**D. F. G**. 11. 15	**T. U**. 22. 23. 24	**E. I**	**L. M. P**. 20. 21
Small mahogany	**A. B. D. F. G**. 6. 9. 11	**N. R. T. U**. 22. 23. 24	**E. H**. 2. 7. 13. 16. 17	**L. S**. 20
Mahogany furniture	**A. B. D. F. G**. 6. 11	**N. R. T. U**. 23. 24	**C. E. H. I. J. K**. 16. 18	**L. M. P. S**. 21
Drinking glasses	**B. D. F**. 3. 15	**N. T. U**. 22. 23. 24	**C. E. I**. 7. 12. 14. 17	**L. P**. 21
Old commodities				
Pewter	3. 4. 8. 9. 11	**N**	**J. K**. 1. 2. 7. 10. 14. 16. 17	**L. M**
Delft ware	**F**. 4. 8. 11		2. 7. 17	
Forms/benches			7. 10. 16. 17	21
Trenchers			2. 17	
Buffets	**F**. 9		1	21

- Gross figures show Higher rank numbers in **bold** and newspaper advertisements (*).

Table 5:6 Ownership of selected goods by Lower rank middle class by occupation, 1761-1853.

Objects	Farmers	Tradesmen	Artisans
gross figures	6 + **1 (1*)**	5 (1*) + **2 (1*)**	7 (1*) + **3 (2*)**
New commodities			
Saucepans	16	14. **20**	3. 11. **23. 24**
Earthenware	2. 12. 16. 19. **21**	14. 18. **20. 21**	11. 17. **22. 23. 24**
Books	7		3. 8. 11. **22. 23. 24**
Clocks	7. **21**	**21**	3. 6. 8. 11. **22. 23. 24**
Pictures	2. 7	1	3. 4. 11. **23. 24**
Looking glasses	**21**	9. 13. **20. 21**	3. 6. 8. 11. 15. 17. **22. 23. 24**
Curtains	2. 7. 19	**20**	3. 11. 15. **22.** 24
Knives & forks		**20**	3. 11. **23**
China	7		8. 11. 15. 17. **23**
Hot drink utensils	2. 7. 12. 16. 19	1. 9. 14	3. 8. 11. 15. 17. **23**
Silver	2. 7		3. 8. 11. 15. 17. **23**
Carpets		**20**	11. **22. 23. 24**
Sofas	12		11. **22. 23. 24**
Cotton furnishings	**21**	**20. 21**	11. 15. **22. 23. 24**
Small mahogany	16	9. 18	6. 11. **22. 23. 24**
Mahogany furniture	16. **21**	18. **21**	6. 11. **23. 24**
Drinking glasses	7. 12. **21**	14. **21**	3. 11. 15. 17. **22. 23. 24**
Old commodities			
Pewter	2. 7. 10. 16	1. 9. 14	3. 4. 8. 11. 17
Delft ware	2. 7		4. 8. 11. 17
Forms/benches	7. 10. 16. **21**	**21**	17
Trenchers	2		17
Buffets	**21**	1. 9. **21**	

- Gross figures show post 1810 households in **bold** and newspaper advertisements (*). One consumer (21) appears in two categories since Mr Dorsett had a small farm and also kept an inn.

In Table 5:4 the ownership of old and new commodities were set out in order that comparisons could be made according to status and date to observe trends in ownership. The gross figures for Higher rank middling sort were similar for the two periods but for the Lower rank middling sort there was a greater number for the earlier period than for the later period. These possible totals need to be taken into consideration when studying Tables 5:4-5:6.

The general trends shown in Table 5:4 are that the Higher rank middling sort owned more substantial mahogany furniture and textile items (carpets, sofas, cotton furnishings), although curtains were not listed in many of their inventories. This may be explained by more of the Higher rank lists deriving from newspaper advertisements and which were less detailed than full inventories. Where the Lower rank middling sort were most heavily represented was in the categories of small display items (clocks, looking glasses, small mahogany items) and in goods associated with new ways of serving and eating food and drink (earthenware, utensils for hot drinks and drinking glasses), although china ceramics and knives and forks were only present in a few inventories. In the section devoted to old commodities, the goods that were considered somewhat old fashioned by the period, the Lower rank continued to own these goods after the Higher rank had discarded them or relegated them to lesser parts of the house which were less well itemised in their lists. Although this tendency had decreased in the later part of the period with only one household, an inn, listing forms and a buffet.

Table 5:5 shows the ownership of new and old commodities by location as well as status and time to see if there was a tendency for consumers in the larger towns to be more fashionable than those in the smaller towns and rural locations. This tendency was born out once the gross figures are taken into consideration (a larger number of consumers are included from rural areas in the earlier period than the other sections). Consumers in the larger towns owned more goods in all categories with the smaller towns most represented in the items associated with new styles of eating and drinking (earthenware and utensils for hot drinks) and in the items associated with investment (silver and mahogany goods). The ownership of goods by people in the larger towns were fairly stable over the entire period, while there was an increase in ownership of some goods for the rural consumers; looking glasses, china, carpets and cotton furnishings, showing that the differences were decreasing somewhat during the

period. Ownership of old commodities was markedly higher for the rural consumers but this also decreased by the later period.

Table 5:6 deals with the ownership of goods by Lower rank middling sort according to their occupations. There were slightly more artisans listed but even taking this into account, their ownership of the new commodities was higher than that of the farmers and tradesmen. Most of the artisans lived in the larger towns and this combination of location and occupation seems to have favoured fashionable consumption. Weatherill's research suggested that tradesmen and merchants had been the most likely to consume the new commodities during the earlier period of 1660-1760. This research does not necessarily go against her findings. The tradesmen owned the least number of old commodities demonstrating more fashionable awareness than the artisans in this respect. Another reason for the tradesmen being less well represented, than in Weatherill's research, is that the better off tradesmen considered here have been placed in the Higher rank category.

The possession of small items in mahogany, looking glasses and utensils for tea and coffee increased throughout the period. Saucepans and books remained rare. In post 1800 inventories pewter was less common for Higher rank middling sort, appearing only in Mr Kendal and Mr Pratchett's list. Since both also had quantities of earthen ware and china, the pewter was probably for kitchen use. By the late eighteenth century others of Higher rank did not have pewter. Textiles were largely absent in later eighteenth century Lower rank middling homes, whether in Birmingham or in the smaller towns. Old fashioned commodities; delft, forms, trenchers and buffets were found only in Lower rank homes apart from delft and a buffet occurring in Charles Wyatt's house in 1794.

The evidence suggests that artisans in Birmingham, and other larger towns, were more inclined to keep up with modern trends than their equivalent in smaller towns.

Among the Birmingham artisans Thomas Heeley's inventory most noticeably contained fashionable items. Heeley has already been mentioned because he owned items of furniture that suggested a well furnished house. The individual items listed bear this out. Heeley had possessions in many categories; saucepans, books, clocks, pictures, looking glasses, curtains, knives and forks, utensils for hot drinks, silver and drinking glasses. In addition he had none of the old fashioned goods. Heeley's participation in fashionable consumption is particularly noteworthy since he died as early as 1764.

The most fashionable consumption among Bridgnorth artisans was found in the inventory of Jane Browne, described as a plumber and glazier in her inventory, in 1797.[39] She had earthenware, clocks, china, utensils for hot drinks, silver, small mahogany items and drinking glasses. However she did have three of the old items; delft ware, forms and trenchers.

The rural location of farming probably affected the household arrangements of farmers and their ownership of goods. Weatherill found that farmers were amongst the least fashionable and Schoelwer has said they were less likely to use window curtains in the eighteenth century since they were less concerned with privacy.[40] A contemporary commentator, seems to confirm this although with an important proviso with regard to rank; Loudon recommended that farm houses:

> ought to be substantial, and rather plain, than highly ornamented: because the occupation of the farmer is less delicate and refined than that of the followers of most other trades and professions.....of course the wealthy farmer may have his drawing room as highly finished, and richly furnished as the independent landowner.[41]

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[39]Her household goods totalled £63.19.4 and with her business a grand total of £116.15.7

[40]S.P. Schoelwer (1979), 'Form, Function, and Meaning in the Use of Fabric Furnishings: a Philadelphia Case Study, 1700-1775', *Winterthur Portfolio,* volume 4, number 1, pp. 25-40, p. 34.

[41]J.C. Loudon (1839), *Encyclopdia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture* [1833], London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, p. 650.

Cobbett on the other hand was indignant that farmers in the early nineteenth century were becoming over fashionable[42] and the cartoon of the pretentious Farmer Giles, from about the same time makes much the same point. (Figure 5:1) This seems rather harsh according to the quite modest Lower rank farmhouses here. The examples here lacked books, pictures, looking glasses, knives and forks, china, carpets, sofas, and cotton goods, and to some extent retained pewter, trenchers, delft ware and forms. Inventories 2 and 7 are of the same farm house; inventory 2 made in 1761 when John Marrian died and inventory 7 made nine years later, when his widow, Susanna Marrian died. She acquired more delft ware, looking glasses, window curtains in an additional bed chamber, a mahogany tea chest with canisters and silver tongs and a 'case for books' which suggests that she also acquired some books. The twenty trenchers which were listed in the kitchen in the earlier inventory had gone from the later one, which suggests some modernising of food serving and presentation.

The general trends were increases in ceramics, tea and coffee utensils and small mahogany items, but a slower increase in the acquisition of books, knives and forks and better quality china. Perhaps most significant was the lack of textile items; window curtains for any room and other textiles for the living rooms. It was these items that added comfort and changed the look of living rooms during the period and have been linked to the changing nature of homes.[43] In the later eighteenth century cotton goods were only just beginning to become cheaper and more widespread, while carpets had to wait for Kidderminster, or ingrain type carpets to become cheaper in the early nineteenth century. It appears that people were slow to favour the items that were being imbued with strong emotive meanings connected with the domestic environment, perhaps because these items had a low resale value. They

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[42]William Cobbett (1967), *Rural Rides* [1825], Harmondsworth: Penguin, p199.
[43]The other item that did this was the use of wall paper, but this would not be listed in an inventory unless hand painted and on removable battens. Wallpaper came down in price in the 1830/40s.

preferred instead to purchase items that had an intrinsic value, which were an investment; silver and small items made of mahogany.

Listing of Rooms

It is when the disposition of objects and the implied use of objects and rooms are considered that major differences become apparent, with a widening gap in lifestyle between the different classes. As was seen in the last section on aristocratic and gentry homes, a variety of living rooms were available for front/back use and for different functions although the use was imprecise in the later eighteenth century becoming more distinct in the nineteenth.[44] To some extent the Higher rank middling sort followed a similar pattern. The Lower rank middling sort were lacking in this respect and it can be surmised that various disadvantages resulted. Davidoff and Hall claim that 'It was the middle ranks who erected the strictest boundaries between private and public space'.[45] This point is part of their argument concerning the separation of work and home, during the period 1780-1850. Davidoff and Hall's conclusions always come back to the emergence of a homogenous middle class reaction. In the examples analysed here the situation was less conclusive.

Looking first at the Higher rank households in the late eighteenth century Charles Wyatt's home in 1794 displayed some typical characteristics. His house had listed a 'Front Parlour' and a 'Back Parlour' with the 'Hall' between. This was in a town house in St Paul's Square; a fashionable and smart area on the north-eastern edge of Birmingham. (See Figure 3:8) The original houses that remain in St Paul's Square are four stories high, two bay brick houses. Although the family were well connected

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[44] The distribution of objects in the home might also be affected by the time of year that the inventory was taken. However, there were no noticeable trends in the sample used here. For example, two 18th century inventories with beds in the kitchen (which might indicate that beds had been moved there for warmth) were made in July and August. Patterns of use according to season might possibly be revealed if a larger sample of inventories were consulted.

[45] Davidoff and Hall (1987), p. 359.

they were just starting out in their married life and the inventory was probably made at the point when Wyatt was selling up to move to London and promote his business interests there. These points were reflected in the household possessions in the living rooms, smart but not affluent:

Front Parlour	
6 Mahogany chairs with canvas seats and 2 elbow do. To suit	4.14.60
Mahogany cabriole sopha with 2 bolsters and cotton covers	3.12.00
Sqr. 2 leaf Mahogany dining table	1.15.00
Mahogany Pembroke table	0.15.00
Sqr. Pier glass in gilt frame	
3.03.00	
2 Venetian Blinds	1.04.00
2 mahogany canvas blinds	0.02.00
Wire fender with brass top	0.12.00
Hall	
Brass mounted vase lamp with Reflector	0.18.00
Eight day clock in carved mahogany case	5.00.00
Deal corner Beaufet	0.16.00
Back Parlour	
9 mahogany chairs 1 Elbow do.	3.07.06
Mahogany Music stool	0.07.06
Mahogany side board	1.15.00
Mahogany Knifecase with 10 handle desert knives and 9 forks	0.12.06
Set of plated castors	0.12.00
Linen roller blind	0.07.00
Wire fender & set of fire irons	0.07.06
Green Scotch floor carpet	1.05.00

The presence of mahogany furniture in both parlours suggest display to have been equally possible in both rooms but their differing use is not clear. The dining table in the front room suggests that this was the dining parlour although the most comfortable item of seating furniture, the sofa was also in this room and, even more confusing, is the fact that the sideboard was in the back room. It can only be assumed that the Front Parlour was the smarter of the two rooms, partly because it was at the front of the building, also the pier glass would have provided display possibilities. No carpet was listed but at this period a dining room without a carpet

was acceptable and if there were polished floor boards they would have provided a prestigious flooring instead. While the back room had mahogany items it had less furniture and had the addition of an ingrain carpet. The sideboard and the dessert cutlery being listed in the back room add to the confusion about which room was used for dining. The back room may have been the family's sitting room with items stored there for public use. The ordering in the inventory reinforces this idea, with the 'China Closet' following the 'Back Parlour' which might have been a cupboard in the back room. This confusion over use was not untypical at this period.[46]

While Wyatt was still at a modest level of consumption Joseph Priestley was more established, with a grand house on the outskirts of Birmingham, but his living rooms reflect similar tendencies to those of Charles Wyatt. The list reads 'Front Parlour', 'Large Back Parlour'. The front room had:

Eight mahogany Chairs and 2 elbow Horse Hair Seats	11.00.00
A Tea Table	01.01.00
A pair Glass Lustres	03.03.00
Two Cotton Window Curtains Lines Laths &c.	06.06.00
Ten Chair Covers Window Cushion Cover	00.10.00
A set of China Chimney Ornaments	01.06.00
A Pier Glass Gilt and Mahogany frame	03.10.00
A Mahogany Card Table	01.16.00

A number of framed drawings and a stove with fire irons completed the contents of what appears to have been an attractive room, with matching textiles and various elegant display items, although no carpet or sofa was mentioned. The Large Back Parlour had a far longer list with ten chairs, dining table, tea table, sofa covered in same fabric as the window curtains, which had japanned cornices, a sideboard, writing desk, book shelves, reading lamps, a marble slab and iron brackets plus framed paintings, prints and ornaments and 'About 9 ½ yards Painted Oil Cloth'.

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[46]A room with unclear use is shown in a print of a living room with people conversing with a sideboard with pedestals and knife box in the background, dated 1778, and described in Thornton as a dining room but in Samaurez Smith as a drawing room. Thornton (1984), p. 170; Charles Samaurez Smith (1993), *Eighteenth-Century Decoration*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, p. 288.

While the front room seemed to be simply a parlour the back room combined dining room, drawing room and parlour/study. It was a larger room and since this was a country house the front/back rule does not apply. The Large Back Parlour may well have overlooked the garden and therefore been the smartest and most attractive room for public as well as private use. The front room may have functioned as a more intimate room for receiving guests or for private family use. However, in such a grand house the combining of all uses in the most prestigious room was not entirely satisfactory.

These examples of Higher rank middle class people had homes that had a choice of living rooms with at least one if not two that were suitable for public use; smart furniture, display items and the requisite pieces for dining in style and for general entertaining. Perhaps most importantly, these rooms were completely devoid of any associations with work or sleeping. What they lacked was a distinct purpose, a characteristic they had in common with the earlier aristocratic and gentry homes. This characteristic was also once again resolved by the early nineteenth century and can be clearly seen in Mr Pratchett's inventory of 1824. A 'Dining Room' and 'Parlour' are listed and each room had the necessary items to fit the description and nothing else. The dining room therefore had chairs, table, sideboard and celleret, while the parlour had a couch, chairs, card table, and loo table. Even a somewhat different decorative scheme is suggested by the polished steel fender and grey moreen curtains for the dining room while the parlour had the more exuberant colouring of brass fender, scarlet moreen curtains and gilt pole. Such differences in decoration were in keeping with early to mid nineteenth century taste and was linked to the pronounced distinctions made in the decoration and furnishing of rooms, giving each a distinct character; the drawing room being the most decorative and

feminine while the dining room had heavier and darker schemes that were thought more masculine.[47]

There were clear similarities of household arrangements and therefore of possible uses, of the living rooms, of the Higher rank middle class and those of the classes above them. A different picture emerges when the Lower Rank middle class are considered. In their examination of separation of work and home Davidoff and Hall claim that different sections of the middle class, while experiencing different problems, came to similar solutions to affect this all important homemaking strategy. This can be summarised as; professional men such as doctors and attorneys were less anxious to separate work from home as there was no dirt and noise to be separated from. Shops and inns in the early nineteenth century both made separate rooms for the family. It was 'Farms [that] presented the greatest challenge to the separation of domestic life from production.' But even here, they claim, far more was tidied into barns and sheds while the farmhouse was given a smarter appearance with brick elevations over older constructions and with a genteel 'front' to the road.[48] The selection of inventories examined here present a less conclusive picture. While complete separation may have been thought desirable, many Lower rank middling people continued to live and work on the same premises and their living accommodation probably failed to articulate clearly how the rooms were used.[49]

The majority of Lower rank homes appear to have had no distinct parlour at all; the kitchen had to double as a living room, or they had a parlour but it was also used for storage of goods associated with work and/or as a bed chamber. (Figure 5:2) The few to have a parlour seem to have used it as a dining parlour, that is combining the

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[47]Gendering of rooms was referred to in the Introduction. See Loudon (1839) and Juliet Kinchin (1996), 'Interiors: Nineteenth-Century Essays on the 'Masculine' and the 'Feminine' Room', in Pat Kirkham (ed.), *The Gendered Object*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
[48]Davidoff and Hall (1987), pp. 366-367.
[49]There were too few Lower rank middle class inventories dated between 1800 and 1850 to explore this aspect fully.

two uses (although the dining parlour did at least separate out the front/back activities). These tendencies continued throughout the period and were true of the people who were well represented in the ownership of new commodities, for example both Thomas Heeley and Jane Browne seemed to have combined a bed chamber and parlour. It would seem therefore, that although people were acquiring individual items they were not using them to best advantage, according to contemporary fashionable ideas. People were acquiring some items that had display qualities attached to them but they were not assembling them into a coherent interior that carried with it the connotations of domestic taste, comfort and ease. Whether this was due simply to limited means or whether these differences in interiors, according to social status, also betray differences in priorities is not clear. An example of very mixed use is the inventory of Thomas Lovatt in 1786:

In the Parlour	
One round Table	0.07.00
5 Chairs & one old do.	0.06.00
Two spinning wheels	0.05.00
One saddle & Bridle &c.	0.12.00
Two Waggon Ropes & some hemp	0.07.00
In the little Parlour	
Two small Tables	0.04.00
One Couch & 3 Chairs	0.07.00
2 market baskets	0.01.00
A night Stool & Pan	0.02.06

There was also a bed and a servant's bed in the little parlour. Neither room appeared to have functioned as a parlour. Although the 'little Parlour' had some of the ingredients it also functioned as a bed chamber and therefore by 1786 was not appropriate for public use.

Names of Rooms

As shown the middle class, especially those of Lower rank, were slow to acquire rooms with a distinct purpose although this was the fashionable trend towards the end of the eighteenth century. This point is also demonstrated in the continued use of the term parlour to describe living rooms rather than a more specific name. The term parlour was introduced in medieval times, to distinguish the private apartments of the head of the household and his family from the rest of the household and was therefore the preserve of the wealthy. Over the centuries the term was applied to a general living room that was free of the dirtier aspects of a house and had certainly spread to the better off middling sort by the eighteenth century. Although it was desirable to have a parlour, rather than a kitchen or houseplace that doubled as a living room, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, just as most Lower rank middling sort were acquiring parlours, the wealthy were discarding them for rooms with more specific titles. This was just the period when a far more distinct purpose was required of living rooms to designate use and by whom, whether family, servants or guests. Therefore name use is an important indicator of fashionableness and style of home management.

Homes that had more than one living room chose various appendages to distinguish one from the other, such as front, back, large or best parlour.[50] This trend continued into the nineteenth century although by the 1830's Higher rank middle class people were following the fashion with more specific rooms and titles to match. It seems to have been a mark of Lower rank status to have only a general all-purpose parlour or if possible a best 'front' parlour, plus a general everyday living room which might also be the kitchen, with a scullery for the dirtier work.

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[50]Higher rank - 6 had two parlours with various names. This was all the inventories the rest were newspaper advertisements and rooms were not named. Lower rank - 5 had two parlours, of which only 3 seemed to have used both as parlours, 8 had one parlour, 4 had none (in 1 the rooms were not named and 2 were inns.) The remainder were newspaper advertisements.

One of the later inventories does show a progression of a kind. This was the home of Richard Price, a miller, who died in 1802. His parlour contained appropriate items, nothing to do with work and no beds or bedding. However it did not have a dining table, this appeared in the kitchen list. While this produced a single function parlour it still left the problem of how to entertain non family members; a 'decent' dinner was not possible let alone an elegant one. It lacked the clearer distinctions required for polite society.

The two Lower rank inventories that contained two parlours that had a distinct use were Eyken the cabinet maker and Bissell, metal wares manufacturer in Birmingham.[51] Eyken's home seems to have doubled as storage space for extra items of furniture, some unfinished. His parlours, one of which seems to have been a dining parlour, although only containing a pillar table, may well have also acted as a showcase for his wares. Bissell's late inventory of 1842, is perhaps indicative of the trend towards a more articulated genteel interior that required rooms to have specific uses. One was a 'parlour' and the 'sitting room' seems to have been a dining parlour; it contained nothing except the required furniture but still the person making the inventory did not think that it warranted the title of dining room. Another confusing point was the listing of a sideboard in the parlour.

The Lower rank middling sort were more likely, than the Higher rank, to have to consider the economics of heating rooms in winter and therefore they may have found it desirable to have only one living room with a fire. This would have limited the number of rooms used and cut down on the possibilities of how the rooms in a house might be utilised. Thus individual items were not enough to produce a comfortable or fashionable interior. Veblen's idea of 'conspicuous consumption' and Simmel's idea of emulation do not work fully when individual items had display possibilities but the context for display was lacking. Weatherill's list of new and

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[51]PRO, PROB 31/678/155; BRL, MS 319/4.

fashionable commodities, while useful for plotting consumption patterns, should not be used in isolation; the context of the home affected how objects were used within it.

'Taste' and the Middle Class

The discussion on the nature of middle class homes has so far focused on the possession of particular objects and where they were situated in the home using inventories as a source. As already noted, it is difficult to be sure whether a piece of furniture was in a particular style when the only evidence is a brief description in an inventory. For this section on taste it has been necessary to include other kinds of evidence. The purpose of this section is to ascertain whether middle class consumers adopted particular styles in home furnishings. If fashions were followed it might be argued that this indicates emulation, as proposed by McKendrick.[52] Or it might also be the case that rather than use style as a superficial veneer, taste in interiors was used to express particular attitudes and ideals. This may have taken the form of a middle class taste or identity (a middle class culture of consumption as suggested by Davidoff and Hall[53]), or factions that cut across class boundaries.

The nine households selected to examine taste span most of the period. They are all households for which sufficient evidence exists for a detailed analysis of the interiors; the style of the furnishings and ornaments, and taste expressed through paintings, prints and books. For a few of the examples inventories can be used because they contain descriptive words that reveal the nature of the objects and for the rest other types of evidence can be used such as bills, illustrations and surviving objects.

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[52]McKendrick (1982).
[53]Davidoff and Hall (1987).

Table 5:7 Households selected for an examination of taste in home furnishings.

Name	Occupation	Location	Status	Date
Sir Herbert Pakington	Gentleman	Westwood, Worc	Aristocracy	1786
John Staunton Esq	Gentleman	Kenilworth	Gentry	1811
Dr Joseph Priestley	Unitarian minister	Birmingham	HR	1791
Matthew Boulton	Manufacturer	Birmingham	HR	1761-96
David Parkes	Schoolmaster & artist	Shrewsbury	HR	1834
Ann Boulton	Spinster	Birmingham	HR	1819-29
James Watt	Manufacturer	Aston Hall, Birmingham	HR/ Gentry	1811-1840s
Richard Pratchett	Retired druggist	Birmingham	HR	1824
Jonah Bissell	Metal wares manufacturer	Birmingham	LR	1842

The dates refer to the main sources used. HR and LR are Higher and Lower rank.

Changing styles[54] might be seen as a rather superficial way of expressing taste or preference in home furnishings but some commentators have linked stylistic preferences with social and cultural attitudes.[55] Of particular relevance for this period are theories that have been proposed to explain why classicism gave way to other styles. Classicism has been seen as the élite style of the aristocracy and therefore its demise in the early to mid nineteenth century has been linked to the growth of a middle class who wanted to challenge the traditional leaders in society, the aristocracy.[56]

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[54]A summary of the styles in interiors during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are:
Neo Classicism - throughout 18th century
Rococo - 1740s and 50s, asymetrical decoration plus orientalism
Gothick - 1750s onwards, creative interpretation of 'ancient' styles
Regency - early 19th century, classical but using Greek models
William IV - 1830s, classicism giving way to less austere furnishings
Gothic Revival - 1830s onwards, less whimsical than Gothick.
Rococo Revival - 1840s onwards, a more exuberant version of the eighteenth century style
Eclecticism - by 1851 Exhibition, Rococo, French styles and other influences.

[55]For example Campbell links Romanticism and middle class consumption habits, and Prown, links early nineteenth century classicism with Republicanism in the United States. Colin Campbell (1987), *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell; Jules David Prown (1980), 'Style as Evidence', *Winterthur Portfolio,* volume 15, number 3, pp. 197-210.

[56]The demise of classicism as the dominant style in the early to mid nineteenth century refers to its use in domestic architecture and interiors. Classicism continued to be used for civic buildings such as town halls, libraries, museums and law courts.

One of the main proponents of such a theory is Campbell who has argued that Romantic[57] sensibility was embraced by the middle class in Britain. Romanticism he claims was the reason for the greater propensity to consume and the particular form that it took. Such consumption was used by the middle class to express their moral position and their opposition to the élite members of society. Aristocratic consumers were seen, claims Campbell, as immoral and were identified with the austere and unemotional subject matter and style of representation of neo-classicism:

> Responsiveness to beauty thus became a crucial moral quality, such that any deficiency in this respect became a moral lapse, whilst correspondingly virtue became an aesthetic quality, such that, in turn, any moral lapse was 'bad taste'.[58]

Campbell is a sociologist and his concern is with structures and attitudes within society but his argument is at times ahistorical. Campbell's argument sweeps across the centuries from the seventeenth to the nineteenth, finding links between seventeenth century Puritanism and early nineteenth century consumption patterns, while the late eighteenth century rejection of classicism by the middling sort is linked to the ideas of a publication in 1711.[59] There is also a problem with linking the nature of middle class consumption and the Protestant religion, when similar patterns were developing on the Continent, in largely Catholic countries. The most problematic aspect of Campbell's arguement is that Romanticism was a later construction used to explain changes in cultural expression but was not perceived in the same way at the time. While it must be admitted that Romanticism was a quite

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[57]Campbell explains that Romanticism is difficult to define precisely being 'a general cultural movement, on a par with the Renaissance, or the immediately preceding Enlightenment. More narrowly, it can be seen as the name for a type of art and taste, with an associated aesthetic theory, one normally contrasted with classicism or realism.' Campbell (1987), p. 180. While works of art and literature have been defined as part of the Romantic movement there were no direct equivalent in furniture and furnishings although the gothic and Rococo revivals in the early nineteenth century could be said to express similar attitudes.

[58]Campbell (1987), p. 152.

[59]Campbell (1987), pp. 150-3. The text he refers to is the Third Earl of Shaftsbury's *Characteristics of Man, Manners, Opinions, Times,* published in 1711.

different style of expression in the arts (for example compare Mozart with Beethoven) there was no particular style in home furnishings that could be described as such; various forms of classicism continued to be the dominant fashionable style for interiors until the 1830s although the gothic style was a possible alternative.

However, Campbell has been useful for opening up the debate on consumption, taste and the middle class. His ideas have certainly informed Nenadic's contribution to *Consumers and Luxury* where she analyses 'Romanticism and the urge to consume in the first half of the nineteenth century'.[60] The tighter time frame is useful but more importantly Nenadic looks in some detail at what was being consumed; Campbell is always rather vague on this point. Nenadic suggests some themes in Romanticism which were taken up enthusiastically by consumers; goods with emotional associations and nationalistic expression. Therefore:

> Houses became sites in which goods that were laden with emotional associations were located and ... employed to evoke a romantic frame of mind. [And there was an increase in the consumption of] books and magazines for poetry and fiction, musical instruments, sheet music and attendance at concerts, the purchase of art and attendance at art classes and galleries.[61]

Of course objects of all kinds and at any period could have been associated with emotional feelings, the difference was that Romanticism made the associations obvious. Nenadic claims that Romanticism in its 'pure form' was seen by many middle class people as a bad influence on the young and impressionable[62] so that a tamer version was developed which prevailed from about 1815 to the 1840s. This version included the work of Scott, Mary Russell Mitford's gentle descriptions of village life and the more domesticated influence of nature through gardening.[63]

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[60]Stena Nenadic (1999), 'Romaniticism and the Urge to Consume in the first half of the Nineteenth Century' in M. Berg and H. Clifford (eds), *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850,* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.
[61]Nenadic (1999), pp. 210-211.
[62]For example Goethe's suicidal hero in *Sorrows if Young Werther*. Nenadic (1999), p. 218.
[63]Nenadic (1999), p. 219.

Nenadic's tamer version of Romanticism might be more correctly termed sensibility which has a more general application to the artistic and social proclivities of the period.

A link between late eighteenth and early nineteenth century sensibility and Victorian taste is suggested by Wolff who traces the influence of 'separate spheres' and domestic ideology on the art and culture of the mid nineteenth century and claims that 'Nineteenth-century culture was itself changed by those same processes which produced the middle class and its ethic.'[64] The notion of separate spheres and domestic ideology permeate a lot of writing on the nineteenth century, and its possible influence on homemaking will be discussed at some length in Chapter 7 on Gender. Wolff's thesis is that these ideas had cultural manifestations in Victorian genre pictures and the work of the Pre-Raphaelites. Genre pictures depicted ordinary life, often working people, such as farm labourers at work in the fields or at home in a cottage. Genre paintings began to be preferred to the formal styles of portraiture and their popularity grew in the later eighteenth century with the work of such artists as Wheatley and Moreland. Increasingly the subjects chosen incorporated a narrative of an improving nature and Saumarez Smith claims they were popular for public exhibitions because they could be seen to have a moral purpose.[65] By the early to mid nineteenth century these pictures employed narratives that were strongly anecdotal and sentimental. The paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites were narratives; while some paintings were of literary or historical subjects such as a scene from a Tennyson poem, many were of contemporary subjects. For example *Work* by Ford Madox Brown or *Woman's Mission: Companion of Manhood* by George Hicks.[66] A strong moralistic element was always present and was incorporated in the minute

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[64]J. Wolff (1988), 'The Culture of Separate Spheres: the Role of Culture in Nineteenth Century Public and Private Life', in J. Wolff and J. Seed (eds), *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 126.
[65]Saumarez Smith (1993), p. 302.
[66]*Work* and *Woman's Mission* are reproduced in D.S. MacLeod (1996), *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 183 and 218.

detail and careful brushwork, characteristic of Pre-Raphaelite work. Wolff's idea is that nineteenth century art incorporated a moral tone and an attitude to domesticity that was specifically middle class.

The idea that 'the middle class' preferred one kind of painting over others depends on the existence of a homogenous middle class. MacLeod questions this assumption in her analysis of middle class patronage of art in the nineteenth century. She emphasises the need to look at individuals and their collecting patterns in order that the complexities of taste can be discerned. MacLeod found that collectors in Birmingham and other Midlands' towns were conservative in their taste in art continuing to purchase the art associated with the aristocracy and gentry well into the nineteenth century. Such art work would have included Old Masters and English painters who specialised in landscapes and seascapes, for example the work of Turner, Constable and the Birmingham artist David Cox. By contrast Manchester patrons favoured the genre subjects of Frederick Goodall, William Mulready and William Frith and were early patrons of the Pre-Raphaelites. MacLeod maps these different attitudes in art to differences between Birmingham and Manchester; differences in manufacturing methods, urban cultural scenes and differences in the urban élite. MacLeod's ideas are useful to set against Wolff's; that while genre paintings and the work of the Pre-Raphealites increased in popularity during the nineteenth century, they were not patronised at the same time, in all locations and by the whole middle class, producing a uniform taste. Patrons of art are however always from a relatively wealthy minority. More accessible to most middling people were prints. Genre paintings were particularly suitable for being translated into engraved images and this was done from the later eighteenth century onwards, making genre pictures widely available.[67]

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[67]Saumarez Smith (1993), p. 302.

So far the discussion of taste has focused on the move away from neo-classicism and towards eclecticism, for fashionable interiors and the possible tension between aristocratic and middle class taste. The creation of a fashionable interior, whether it was classical, gothic or rococo revival was not desirable among some consumers. Instead a rather different method of creating an interior was adopted. Wainwright has described this difference in attitude in his work on antiquarian taste between 1750 and 1850, which he terms Romantic Interiors; these were part of the gothic revival although, confusingly, they could include classical objects. Wainwright does not suggest that the interiors he examines were physical manifestations of the Romantic movement in the arts. However, it is possible that these interiors came closest to being just that since they did not observe any clear demarcation between classicism and other styles but rather the manner of creation and the mood that they were intended to evoke was all important. Wainwright describes how these interiors were quite different to most fashionable houses.

> In the eighteenth century...it was usual in grand houses to have interiors, fittings and furnishings designed by an architect or upholsterer so that there was a coherent style throughout.....works of art and antiquities were often incorporated into interiors that were filled with modern objects. Even in these cases the overwhelming character would still have been one of modernity.[68]

Examples abound of this kind of interior, such as those created by Adam.[69] By the 1760s modern copies or works inspired by classical models were often preferred to the genuine classical object, hence the popularity of the sculptures by Canova.[70] By contrast the creators of 'romantic interiors' were more active in the process and the collections were added to gradually over many years. Wainwright makes a further telling contrast when he states that the antiquarians were interested in the objects because of their age, whereas the people who decorated their homes with the spoils

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[68]C. Wainwright (1989), *The Romantic Interior,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 1.
[69]For example Harewood House, Kedlestone Hall and Osterley Park.
[70]Perfect antique statues were in short supply so copies were made. See the Marble Hall at Kedleston with statues in niches including two identical copies of the same statue. National Trust Guide for *Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire* (1994), London: National Trust, p. 15.

of their Grand Tours were expressing the aesthetic taste that they had acquired. While the former joined the Society of Antiquarians the latter by contrast would have joined the Society of Dilettanti.[71]

The above description of contrasting interiors appears to relate only to 'grand houses' and therefore of little relevance to the middling home. However, it is the attitude to the objects in the home that is significant, not simply the style of an object or interior. In the following examples the social position of the consumer, their attitudes and beliefs will be examined along side the evidence of how they furnished their homes. Styles of furnishings and their degree of fashionableness will be considered but of more importance is the combination of objects that might suggest particular tastes being expressed. The evidence will need to be explored to see if any patterns of consumption can be discerned.

Sir Herbert Pakington, 1786 inventory of Westwood House, Worcestershire.

Westwood House was an early seventeenth century house that Sir Herbert Pakington had inherited in 1762 when he became the 7th Baronet. Of the 179 rooms listed in the inventory nine appear to be living rooms. Of these the India Paper Drawing Room and the Dining Room were the grandest rooms and the two which probably had the newest furniture.[72] They appear to reflect taste from around the 1760s with '8 verey rich carved elbow chairs gilt in burni[sh] gold and covered with yallow Genoa damask and brass nails' with a sofa and festoon curtains to match in the Drawing Room. In the Dining Room there were '18 carved mahagany chairs with eagle claw feet, seats covered with green silk damask and brass nails' together with a mahogany dining table. Mahogany chairs with ball and claw feet sound like Chippendale style chairs and therefore dating from the 1760s onwards. It would appear that these two

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[71]Wainwright (1989), p. 6.
[72]Some refurnishing occurred in the 1760s when Sir Herbert Pakington succeeded. Pakington (1975), p. 99.

prestigious rooms were well furnished, in a coherent style which followed the prevailing fashions, of several decades earlier than the inventory date.

As already noted however, Westwood betrayed some old fashioned characteristics in its arrangement, such as the continuation of a suite of rooms, including a grand bedchamber, on the ground floor. Earlier styles were also in evidence, particularly in the Marble Room and the Great Hall. The former presumably had a marble floor and continued the formal theme with '16 portraites of ladies and gentlemen in carved and gilt frames'. It could be that these portraits were of family members, past and present; a serious subject for an ancient family. In addition a number of items might suggest an antiquarian collector's interest with 'over the chimney a piece of armes' and '22 large shells, closet contains Chaina and several other artticuls locked up'. It is not clear if the 'piece of armes' was a painted board with a coat of arms or a piece of armour; either might indicate an interest in antiquarianism. The china may have been the set of fine porcelain that Pakington purchased on which were painted his family crest.[73]

The naming of a room as a 'Great Hall' is further evidence of an old building but also a backward looking family. This room appears to be a formal room rather than a comfortable one, with only hall chairs for furniture. These mahogany chairs were purchased by Sir Herbert for Westwood. They were made in the early eighteenth century and, in a further demonstration of his family's prestige, Pakington had the arms of Pakington and Hawkins (his wife's family) added to them.[74] The large number of pictures listed in the Hall were a mixture of portraits, classical themes,

Westwood House and another house, plus one of 'Old Parr' the celebrated Shropshire

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[73]Pakington, (1975), p. 99.

[74]Pakington (1975), p. 99. The use of the hall to celebrate a family's pedigree was popular in the early eighteenth century. For example Charles Seymour, the 6th Duke of Somerset at Petworth, his house in Sussex, displayed early seventeenth century Italian carved chairs in his hall that had been part of his wife's dowry. His wife was the heiress of the Earl of Northumberland. Through displaying the chairs he was demonstrating his family's lineage rather than fashionable consumption. National Trust Guide for *Petworth House* (1995), London: National Trust, p. 12.

man who was believed to have lived to 152 years of age.[75] 'A figure of Shakespeare and 2 busts' add to the sense of an interest in antiquarianism but a discordant note is a billiard table; billiards were a fashionable past-time in the later eighteenth century.

Taste:

The impression produced by the inventory is that Pakington was interested in and celebrated his ancestry; personal aspects of his family and their past were strongly in evidence. This conclusion is supported by Fanny Burney's comments on a visit to Westwood in 1777. Burney found her hosts hospitable but perhaps lacking in refinement. Lady Pakington she described as 'uncultivated as to books and letters'. Burney also made some useful comments about the Pakington's relationship to their home; referring to Lady Pakington she said:

> She is also immoderately fond of her Mansion that she will scarse suffer anybody to pass a fly, if it is upon one of the windows or tables, without remarking how beautiful it looks. But I find she did not become mistress of this great house early in life, which accounts for that pride of possession that her late arrival makes her feel in all its juvenile force and vivacity.[76]

The antiquarian elements at Westwood seem to stem from this love of the antiquity of the family and their home, rather than part of the later eighteenth century Gothick taste, or the serious antiquarian attitudes described by Wainwright. Fanny Burney comments on the ruins of a chapel in the grounds of Westwood and the coins and artifacts found there, which Lady Pakington found interesting: 'She is fond of figuring upon these subjects; but yet she shewed so much ignorance of History as to render her researches truly ridiculous'.[77] Medieval ruins in the grounds would have appealed to the antiquarian but the opportunity appears to have been lost on the Pakingtons. The Pakingtons celebrated the past, whilst maintaining their family's

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[75]Catalogue of the paintings and drawings etc of David Parkes, SRO 6001/153, p. 26.
[76]Pakington (1975), p. 103.
[77]Pakington (1975), p. 104.

position in the later eighteenth century, by modernising somewhat, the two rooms needed for entertaining; the drawing room and dining room.

John Staunton, inventory for house sale in 1811 of his home in Kenilworth plus papers relating to the Staunton family.

It has already been noted that this was a 'masculine' house, while the drawing room and dining parlour had furnishings appropriate for formal rooms, the other living rooms, that is 'The Study' and 'Stone Parlour', both catered for masculine tastes. A closer look at the listed books and paintings helps to indicate the taste of John Staunton. These items represented a considerable amount; the total valuation for 'furniture and plate, carriage &c' was £1279.16.5, while the paintings and books were valued at a further £344.16.0. The large library of books included all the serious subjects; history, geography, philosophy, theology and literature, but excluded science. Among them was 'Boswells Antiquities of England and Wales, 1786', 'Descriptions of Stowe Gardens, 1769, numerous plates', 'Gilpins Forest Scenery, 2 vol 1794' and the gothic novel by Walpole, the 'Castle of Otranto'. The list of paintings and prints included five family portraits, views of Worksop Manor, Combe Abbey, Warwick Castle, Kenilworth Castle, Kenilworth Priory and Nuneaton Priory. There were a number of landscapes and a portrait of Shakespeare. In addition there were listed a number of paintings by Dutch seventeenth century old masters; Breughel, Danckerts and Gras. These more important pictures, along with the family portraits, were omitted from the sale in 1811.

Taste:

John Staunton was clearly interested in historical and antiquarian matters. His books and prints included items that reveal a sympathy with the Picturesque and Romantic movements. No doubt Staunton's interests were passed on to his eldest son, William

Staunton, who inherited the family home at Longbridge near Warwick, since he became one of the leading antiquarian collectors of the nineteenth century. He acquired a number of earlier collections, including the mid seventeenth century collection of Sir Simon Archer, and he added to these. William Staunton gave his extensive collection to Birmingham Reference Library in 1875.[78]

The old masters owned by John Staunton reveal more than an interest in history. MacLeod makes the point that such art works were associated with the aristocracy and gentry. Such paintings required the funds to purchase them and were often collected by wealthy young men while on the Grand Tour. Old Masters were associated with connoisseurship and the leisure and education that were required, to develop an appreciation for such art works.[79] The continuation in the family of family portraits and the seventeenth century Dutch paintings meant that the Stauntons continued to express their gentry status, well in to the nineteenth century.

David Parkes, sale catalogues for the library, collection of paintings and advertisement for the sale of house hold furniture, of his house in Shrewsbury, in 1834. Plus papers relating to David Parkes.

David Parkes (1763-1833) ran schools in Shrewsbury and in addition was an artist and collector of antiquarian objects. Unlike Pakington and Staunton he was from a middling background without a large income to support his interests. However, according to Wainwright, Parkes fitted the eighteenth century profile of many antiquarians, who were clergymen, doctors and lawyers.[80] That Parkes was a collector of antiquarian objects is well established,[81] what is of interest here is how his interests influenced his home.

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[78]The entire collection of about 2,000 volumes and 2,300 engravings, many of them rare, were lost in a fire in 1879, together with the catalogue of the collection. Staunton Cuttings, BRL ,73128 (IIR 63).
[79]MacLeod (1996), p. 5.
[80]Wainwright (1989), p. 15.
[81]See H.R. Wilson (1978), *David Parkes,* Halesowen, West Midlands: Published by the Author.

The sale catalogue of David Parkes' library, which included not only books but also coins, medals and other artefacts, ran to 72 pages and the sale itself was spread over six days. There was also a separate sale catalogue for his drawings, paintings and engraved prints, which was 31 pages long, with the sale lasting for four days.[82] This remarkable collection contained similar work to Parkes' own artistic output; depictions of the antiquities of Britain, particularly of Shropshire.[83] (Figure 5:3) His library included a 'Bible printed 1568 by Richard Jugg', 'Gilpin, Observations relative to Picturesque Beauty, 1776', 'Johnson, Journey to the Western Isles', works by Byron, the gothic novel by Walpole, 'The Castle of Otranto', the 'Life of Thomas Parr - the old, old very old man by John Taylor the water poet', 'Thomas Chatterton Works, 1803' and 'Fuseli's lectures on Painting'.[84] The list contains essential reading for anyone interested in Picturesque aesthetics and the Romantic movement. The collection of pictures was also in keeping with these ideas and with Parkes' own artistic work, with landscapes and ancient buildings predominating.

Further evidence of Parkes' interests are indicated by the remaining artefacts included in the library sale; coins and tradesmen's tokens, cameos, seals, shells, fossils, spars, tiles, casts, 'curiosities from the South Sea Islands, Herculaneum &c &c' and a piece of an 'Asteroides found near Stratford-upon-Avon, 1822'. There were also two items relating to Shakespeare; a 'Piece of Shakespeare's Mulberry Tree at Stratford-upon-

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[82]SRO, D87.7 and MS 153.

[83]Parkes provided the illustrations for a number of works including *Antiquities of Shropshire,* published in 1807 and the *Beauties of England and Wales,* published in 1811.

[84]Gilpin was the essential guide to appreciating Picturesque landscapes. Fuseli (1741-1825) specialised in Romantic and 'gothick' subjects, and he painted many scenes from Shakespeare, an example of which is in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery accession number P61947. Horace Walpole (1717-1797) was well known for his gothick mansion, Strawberry Hill, and *The Castle of Ortranto* was a gothic novel that preceded the craze for such works in the early 19th century. John Taylor (1680-1653) wrote mostly verse and accounts of journeys he made, his work was appreciated for its historical or antiquarian interest rather than its literary merit. Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770) committed suicide after poetry he had written and passed off as the work of a 15th century monk, was dismissed as a forgery. His work was later found to be of value in its own right and his collected work was first published in 1803. Information on the writers from J.W. Cousin (1951), *A Short Biographical Dictionary of English Literature,* London: Dent.

Avon and a Tobacco Stopper formed from the wood of the same tree'. These items constitute the ingredients of an eighteenth century private museum, still in the Tradescant tradition,[85] with ancient objects, wonders of the natural world, exotic artefacts and curiosities. But were all of Parkes' collection kept in his library or study or was his home an example of the Romantic Interior described by Wainwright, with the collector living amongst his curios? It is unfortunate that the sale of household furniture was separate from the library sale and thus obscuring the relationship between the collection and the household goods.

The sale of Parkes' household furniture is less well documented than his collection since no sale catalogue survives, only the newspaper advertisement.[86] However, from this brief list can be gleaned a notion of the style of his furnishings. All the furniture was in mahogany which was the fashionable wood of the time; the true antiquarian would have had some ebony furniture.[87] Other indications that the furniture was modern and fashionable was the inclusion of a sofa, described as 'on mahogany legs, with scroll ends, hair squab and chintz cover' and therefore dating from the Regency period. Another essential item for the early nineteenth century home, a loo table, was included while the dining chairs were described as 'Trafalga' chairs. The only item that hints at antiquarianism was the top of the loo table, which was described as 'a fine speciman of curious inlaid work' and so might be an older piece added to a new item of furniture.[88]

Taste:

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[85]This was a seventeenth century cabinet of curiosities which formed the basis for the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.
[86]*Salopian Journal*, 8/1/1834.
[87]The association of ebony with antique styles is discussed in Christopher Wilk (ed.) (1996), *Western Furniture, 1350 to the Present Day*, London: Philip Wilson and Victoria and Albert Museum, p. 140.
[88]Such mixing of old and new was not out of keeping with eighteenth and early nineteenth century antiquarianism. Wainwright (1989), p. 57.

David Parkes' home was predominantly modern in its furnishings, although visitors to his home were probably left in no doubt of his antiquarian interests, since presumably every room must have contained pictures that reflected his taste, even if the bulk of his collection was perhaps confined to his library and was therefore only on view to the informed visitor. Perhaps too, Parkes' wife had had a hand in choosing the furnishings for the house generally and this had tempered the effect, with the main rooms of the house putting comfort and propriety before antiquarianism.[89]

The extent of David Parkes' collection reveals that he was a serious collector, which made him part of a fraternity, that were growing in number during the later eighteenth century and early nineteenth, drawn from professional men as well as members of the aristocracy and gentry.[90] Such extensive collections as Parkes' were unusual. It would have been more unusual still if he had assembled his collection into a Romantic Interior, as described by Wainwright. Antiquarianism generally and Romantic Interiors in particular were rare before the mid nineteenth century. After this date the antiques trade became more firmly established to cater for these minority interests.[91]

A rather different attitude to knowledge and culture was displayed in the homes of the next two examples, who perhaps typify Enlightenment ideas and ideals.

Joseph Priestley, inventory of home, 1791

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[89]Unlike Sir Walter Scott's wife who was only allowed to influence the drawing room at Abbotsford, a decidedly Romantic Interior. Wainwright (1989), p. 181-3.
[90]David Parkes was 70 years old when he died in 1833 and had therefore amassed his collection over his long life. The growth of interest in archaeology and its greater professionalisation is demonstrated by Shrewsbury having, in 1860, a branch of the British Archaeological Society, which had been founded in 1844. SRO, Watton Cuttings, volume 8, p. 175.
[91]Wainwright (1989), p. 69.

The engraving of Priestley's ruined house after the riots in 1791 suggest that it was perhaps in a classical style (see Figure 3:4). It was set in its own grounds on the Aston side of Birmingham, smaller than a grand country house but more commodious than a town house, such as that occupied by Charles Wyatt at much the same period. From the inventory evidence the style of the furniture and furnishings is not clear beyond all the main bed chambers and the two parlours having furniture in mahogany. A separate list of prints is more revealing:

Pericles and Aspasia by Miss Kaufman
Diana and Nymphs by Ditto
Genius describing Beauty by Bartolozzi
Prudence restoring Beauty by Ditto
Cleopatra and Asp
Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter by Bartolozzi
Ruins of Palmyra
Minerva protects Telemachus from the Shafts of Love
Idomeneus attempts to stab himself
Twelve beautiful Engravings from Ovid

This list of prints are all of classical and allegorical subjects, which were part of neo-classicism.[92] Allegorical subject matter was also part of the conniosseurship and aristocratic aesthetic already noted in connection with Old Masters.

Priestley had a laboratory in his home and the destruction of this upset him as much as his other belongings.[93] Priestley's serious library and laboratory were important parts of his home, not simply due to his scientific experiments but also because he embraced Enlightenment values. It is perhaps significant that Priestley demonstrated

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[92]Angelica Kauffmann (1741-1807) worked in Italy in the early part of her career as an artist and returned there to spend her last years in Rome where she was part of an artistic circle which included Goethe, Tischbein and Canova. Bartolozzi was an artist who transposed many of her paintings into engravings. During her time in England in the 1760s to 1780s Kauffmann executed decorative paintings for the leading neo-classical architects and interior designers, Stuart, Chambers and Adam, as well as contributing designs for Wedgwood ceramics. Biographical information on Kauffmann and Bartolozzi is from Simon Jervis (1984), *Dictionary of Design and Designer,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 267.

[93]Priestley's letter to Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* about the destruction of his home and laboratory is reproduced in R.K. Dent (1973), *Old and New Birmingham: A History of the Town and its People,* volumes I-III [1878-80], London: EP Publishing, p. 248.

his philanthropy by spending time reorganising the public library.[94] His taste can be summarised along with the next example, Matthew Boulton, Priestley's fellow member of the Lunar Society.

Matthew Boulton, bills and receipts for furnishings and surviving artefacts at Soho House.

Soho House survives and stylistically is a small Georgian country house, although now in an urban setting due to the encroachment of Birmingham. Boulton employed the Wyatts, first James and then Samuel, to remodel the house in the 1790s[95] (see Figure 3:5). The semi-circular entrance porch has two Ionic columns and the facade has four pilasters, also Ionic, that reach up to the projecting cornice above the third floor. Internally the rooms are less well appointed, indicating an older house.[96] The decorative scheme of Boulton's home appears to have been predominantly neo-classical. On entering the house a classical note was immediately struck by columns and pilasters, echoing those on the exterior, but this time in ochre and beige scagliola.[97] (Figure 5:4) The floor was covered in an oil cloth painted to imitate an inlaid marble floor.[98] As noted in the example of Pakington, it was thought important that visitors to a house should get a good first impression of the interior and of the family who lived there. Boulton's hall imitated the halls of grand country houses, but in poorer quality materials and on a miniature scale.[99]

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[94]MacLeod (1996), p. 111.
[95]J.M. Robinson (1979), *The Wyatts: an Architectural Dynasty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 259.
[96]Boulton had made some earlier changes and the arrangement of rooms may date from these, more modest, alterations. VCH, *Warwicshirek*, volume 7, p. 51.
[97]Scagliola was a process used to imitate marble and was used extensively in the eighteenth century for columns and interior architectural features.
[98]This oil cloth has been recreated at Soho House. Smith, Baber and Downing, of Kensington Street, London, made the oil cloth to Boulton's specifications in 1803 and letters survive in which the proposed design was discussed, together with a sketch for the cloth. BRL, MBP 229/65.
[99]Syon House had such a floor, designed by Robert Adam in 1762 for the 1st Duke of Northumberland. A photograph of this room is reproduced in Gervase Jackson-Stops and James Pipkin (1993), *The English Country House: a Grand Tour,* London: National Trust, frontispiece.

Bills from Newton, Boulton's London cabinet maker, in 1798 make references to a number of items that suggest neo-classical detailing; a table on a pillar and claw stand and 2 mahogany 'Berjier' chairs. The Birmingham cabinet maker, Smallwood, supplied Boulton with 12 'Urn' back chairs, in 1788.[100] In contrast Newton made '12 Mahogany Gothic Back Chairs' with red leather seats for Boulton's dining room in 1798.[101] (Figure 5:5) This room had pillars and pilasters, which had been painted to look like marble, with Ionic capitals to match those in the hall. Although a cheaper version of the real material at this period marbling effects were thought a novelty, and it was not until the early nineteenth century that this practice became popular and finally criticised by reformers, such as Ruskin.[102] Boulton had Newton copy the marbling on the pillars onto some calico, which was glazed and made into curtains for this room.[103]

The classical theme, again with a gothic addition, was repeated in the grounds. Soho House had extensive grounds originally and Boulton laid them out with walks and garden ornaments in the manner of eighteenth century country houses. There were classical buildings including a Temple of Flora but also a rustic hut or hermitage.[104] The gothic back chairs and the hermitage do not detract from the general picture of a neo-classical house, garden and interior. A number of large country houses had similar rustic or gothic elements to give a picturesque note to a classical scene, for example the hermitage at Stourhead, the hermitage at Hawkestone Park or the 'medieval' ruin at Cirencester Park.[105]

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[100]The pillar and claw table was perhaps a pedestal table with claw and ball feet as found on eighteenth century classical furniture. Bergere chairs were originally a French design with the space between arms and seat enclosed by upholstery. The urn back chairs were perhaps shield back chairs inspired by Hepplewhite.

[101]Newton bills, BRL, MBP Misc. Box 1. Smallwood bill, BRL, MBP 474.

[102]Ian C. Bristow (1996), *Architectural Colour in British Interiors 1615-1840,* New Haven and London: Yale, p. 176.

[103]BRL, MBP Correspondence Box N, letter 74.

[104]The garden ornaments were recorded in contemporary drawings; John Phillip Album, Soho House Museum. The rustic hut has been reconstructed from one of these drawings.

[105]The Hermitage and Pantheon at Stourhead are illustrated in Edward Hyams (1968), *The English Garden,* London: Book Club Associates, p. 85.

Like Priestley Matthew Boulton incorporated his scientific interests into his home, with a fossilry and laboratory, in the grounds initially, and then after renovations, in the late 1790s, the fossilry was situated in Soho House next to the dining room.[106] This move would have made the room more prominent and more convenient for use by members of the Lunar Society after they had dined with Boulton. In addition Boulton's house was advanced for its time with an indoor flushing toilet and an under floor system of heating using hot air.[107]

Taste:

Both Priestley and Boulton had homes that were concerned with progress. They both had advanced ideas in scientific matters. That they both chose to furnish their homes in a neo-classical style might at first appear a contradiction. Forty has analysed Wedgwood's use of classical styling in his pottery to disguise the modernity of his manufacturing methods and materials.[108] Forty could just as easily have used the example of Boulton with his classical urns that incorporated ormolu; a cheaper alternative to precious metals and which allowed large scale manufacture.[109] However, this reading of neo-classicism being used as a disguise ignores the delight in new methods and scientific progress which was a feature of Enlightenment attitudes. Lowengard seems to get nearer to the truth in her analysis of the interest in new colours in the eighteenth century which, due to new production methods, 'did not fade or darken, peel or rub off in time.'[110] Lowengard claims that the new colours were loved not only for their beauty and fashionable application but became popular,

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[106]Lists of windows in the house show that the fossilry was created between 1798 and 1803. Information from Soho House Museum.
[107]Information from Soho House Museum.
[108]Adrian Forty (1987), *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750-1980*, London: Thames and Hudson, pp. 13-28.
[109]John Heskett (1980), *Industrial Design,* London: Thames and Hudson, p. 13.
[110]Sarah Lowengard (1999), 'Colours and Colour Making in the Eighteenth Century', in M. Berg and H.Clifford (eds), *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850,* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, p. 111.

and therefore fashionable, because they were new and embodied scientific progress: to invent them, to manufacture objects with them or to consume those objects, all proclaimed one's participation in the 'philosophical ideas about the natural world and social ideas about useful information'.[111]

Both Priestley and Boulton expressed their advanced attitudes through neo-classicism, the rational symetry of its styling suiting their rational and scientific views. Priestley and Boulton both held somewhat advanced ideas to most Birmingham middling sort. A suggestion of Birmingham middling taste in the late eighteenth century can be gleaned through a painting from the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery collection which now hangs in the dining room at Soho House although it was not owned by the Boultons. This portrait of the Mynors family by James Millar, has been placed there because it dates from c. 1790, and so coincides with Matthew Boulton's furnishing of his dining room. The Mynors were a family on a slightly lower social level to Boulton, and less wealthy.[112] James Millar was a Birmingham artist who was favoured by Birmingham's manufacturing élite in the late eighteenth century. His work can be seen as a reflection of the taste in portraiture of a section of Birmingham's Higher rank middling sort. The portrait of the Mynors family, husband, wife, three children plus pet dog and cat, shows them in a 'domestic' setting. (Figure 5:6) Husband and wife are shown seated on a sofa, Mr Mynor with a book on his lap and other books and papers lie on a table beside him, one child lies on the sofa next to his mother,[113] another stands by a group of musical instruments and the third is seated on the floor with his dog. The informality of the group is off

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[111]Lowengard (1999), pp. 114-5.

[112]Robert Mynors was listed in trade directories as a surgeon and man-midwife. 1770-1780 his address was 14 Square. This was presumably Old Square, a new development in 1770 and Birmingham's attempt at town planning in the same mode as Bath. In 1783 the Mynors family were living in Snow Hill where they remained until 1801, the last entry in a trade directory. *Directory of Birmingham* (1770), London: Sketchley; *Directory of Birmingham,* (1780), Birmingham: Pearson and Rollason; *Western and Midland Directory* (1783), Birmingham: Bailey; *Birmingham Directory* (1801), Birmingham: Chapman.

[113]This child had died before the portrait was painted and he is shown reclining with his mother lifting the gauze fabric that is draped over him.

set by elements that appear to be unrealistic and stylised; a red curtain drapes the left hand side of the picture in a theatrical manner, a large archway opens at the back of the picture, into countryside and above the sofa hangs a large framed painting, depicting a grand country house set in extensive grounds, as if implying that this was the exterior of the Mynor's home. The stylisation of the scene is confirmed when other portraits by Millar are examined where the same 'props' were repeated.[114]

James Millar's work continued the method of portraiture known as the conversation piece. This method of depicting people in a domestic setting began in the 1720s and continued in fashion to about the 1760s. Many of these portraits survive showing a family group seated, rather woodenly, around a tea table or playing cards. By the 1740s and 1750s the accuracy of the portraiture had increased, as had the informality of the setting, possibly influenced by the work of Hogarth.[115] The aspects of conversation piece pictures which continued to the 1760s was the use of stock items, probably owned by the artist, and of rather bare interiors with pronounced architectural elements. Art historians assume that these portraits were often painted in the artist's studio or show an idealised version of the sitter's home.[116] The purpose of these portraits was to demonstrate the family's rank and social status and perhaps sometimes, in the case of Higher rank middling sort, their aspirations if not their actual material wealth. Millar's portraits continued the conversation piece mode of depiction into the 1780s and 1790s when other forms of portraiture had superseded it. Millar's popularity in Birmingham may have stemmed from his clients having conservative taste. This would certainly fit with MacLeod's findings relating to the

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[114]A portrait by Millar, of an unnamed Birmingham family, makes use of the same curtain, archway, musical instruments and sofa. Reproduced in Ellis Waterhouse (1981), *The Dictionary of British 18th Century Painters,* Woodbridge: Antique Collector's Club, p. 241.

[115]For examples of conversation piece paintings and a summary of their history see Saumarez Smith (1993), pp. 70-73.

[116]For example, the portrait of William Atherton and his wife painted by Arthur Devis in c. 1742. shows them in a spacious classical interior although they were known to live at this time in the Market Square in Preston which was an old, crowded area still with its butchers' shops and slaughterhouse. Saumarez Smith (1993), pp. 164-5. This idealising was also the case with the Mynor's family portrait; Old Square and Snow Hill were smart Birmingham addresses but did not have grand houses.

taste of Birmingham art collectors in the nineteenth century.[117] The Mynor's portrait contrasts with the portrait of Matthew Boulton painted in 1801 by Lemeul Francis Abbott, which now hangs in the hall at Soho House. (See Figure 5:4)This portrait demonstrates the form of portraiture, that replaced the conversation piece, that was intimate, individual and was intended to capture the character of the sitter.

As demonstrated through the analysis of the Mynors portrait, it was not just the members of the Lunar Society who favoured the classical style of architecture and decoration. Classicism could express advanced views or conservative ones in interiors. In Birmingham the Higher rank middling sort, of the later eighteenth century, identified the classical style with rank and prestige. By the early to mid nineteenth century a greater variety of styles were acceptable for a fashionable interior. How these fashions were interpreted by two second generation Birmingham Higher rank middling sort will be considered next.

James Watt, illustrations and surviving furniture for Aston Hall.

The taste of Ann Boulton and James Watt can be summarised together since their homemaking had some overlapping elements. Ann Boulton moved into Thornhill House in 1819 after James Watt moved out and began to furnish Aston Hall, which he had just leased. They also both used the architect and furniture designer Richard Bridgens extensively.

Bridgens (1785-1846) had worked with George Bullock (c. 1778-1818) in both Liverpool and later in London and was influenced by his style in cabinet making. Both Bridgens and Bullock were high profile designers and in Bullock's case, maker. For example Bridgens published an influential design book in 1838, *Furniture with Candelabra and Interior Decoration Applicable to the Embellishment of Modern and*

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[117]MacLeod (1996).

Old English Mansions.[118] Bullock 'undertook some of the most important furnishing schemes'[119] in the early nineteenth century, among his wealthy and aristocratic clients was the exiled Emperor Napoleon.[120] Their design work is well documented and quite a number of provenanced pieces of furniture survive. In turn this has led to academic research into their careers and the surviving objects designed by them.[121]

Bullock's work was a mixture of Grecian, Elizabethan and Gothic styles (he worked for Scott at Abbotsford in 1816-17).[122] Bullock is perhaps particularly noted for his rather austere furniture which incorporated flat patterns in inlay and marquetry. These designs followed the Greek revival of the early nineteenth century with anthemian or flower patterns copied from Greek architecture. Bullock was unusual for the period for experimenting with native woods and with designs using British flora.[123] Bullock carried out work for James Watt at Thornhill and Bridgens, as a junior partner, was involved in the design of some items.[124] This arrangement would no doubt have continued when Watt took on the much larger project of furnishing the seventeenth century mansion of Aston Hall, but Bullock died in 1818, so Bridgens largely took over the work. The style of furniture for Thornhill is not known and initially Watt does not seem certain about the style he wanted to pursue at Aston Hall, with Bridgens supplying designs in various styles.[125] Bridgens was evolving his own style at this time and during the 1820s and early 1830s the work he did for

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[118]For comments on this publication and comparisons with Bridgen's work for Watt at Aston Hall see Virginia Glenn (1979), 'George Bullock, Richard Bridgens and James Watt's Regency Furnishing Schemes', *Furniture History*, volume 15, pp. 54-67.
[119]Thornton (1984), p. 208.
[120]Wilk (1996), p. 142.
[121]Clive Wainwright has written about Bullock quite extensively, including a book devoted to the subject. *George Bullock Cabinet Maker*, London: John Murray, 1988. Due to their collaboration Bridgens' is included in Wainwright's research. In addition Virginia Glenn has thoroughly researched their work for James Watt, Glenn (1979).
[122]Wainwright (1989), p. 167.
[123]Wilk (1996), p. 142. An example of Bullock furniture displaying these characteristics is shown on page 143.
[124]Glenn (1979), p. 57.
[125]Glenn (1979), pp. 57-8.

Watt became progressively based on actual historical items. As Glenn has noted about some early designs for tables for Aston Hall:

> They are not based on any actual piece of seventeenth-century furniture, but rather they apply the jewelled and faceted motifs of Jacobean woodwork generally to what is basically a familiar later eighteenth-century format - the writing table - strengthening and enlarging it to suit the large and high-ceilinged rooms for which it was intended.[126]

There is further evidence of taste to be gleaned from the additional objects listed in the sale of Watt's possessions in 1849, after his death. These included 'the Collection of PICTURES, DRAWINGS, and PRINTS; a GROUP, in Marble, by GOTT; BUSTS in Plaster, of EMINENT PERSONS, and the beautiful OAK FURNITURE, in ancient style'. Oriental china was also listed. Although Watt's collection of books and prints etc. was extensive (including the sale catalogue for Fonthill from which he had purchased a looking-glass) he could not be classed as an antiquarian and his home fell short of being a Romantic Interior. Evidence suggests that Watt wanted to create 'historic' interiors that were not slavishly accurate but also that did not look like modern fabrications. This is demonstrated by the mixing of old and new, for example the chair designed by Bridgens, and made from seventeenth century panelling which was positioned at the foot of a staircase to conceal a secret cupboard. (Figure 5:7) Two contemporary water colour illustrations of Watt's library also suggest that he wanted to create a particular ambience in his historical interiors. The painting by Katherine Boulton[127] shows the Great Dining Room, which Watt used as his principal library, with little furniture and all ranged around the room in the pre nineteenth century manner. Whereas the painting by Allen E. Everitt[128] depicts it with the same furniture but with the addition of a central table and other objects; still

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[126]Glenn (1979), p. 59. Bridgens appears to have used his work at Aston Hall to perfect his style and when he published *Furniture with Candelabra and Interior Decoration* in 1838 16 of the plates were described as Aston Hall pieces. Glenn (1979), p. 55.

[127]Painted in c. 1847, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, accession number, (1979P.137b).

[128]Dated 1854 but Virginia Glenn believes this painting was done from a sketch made at Aston at the time of the 1849 sale. Glenn (1979), p. 56. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, accession number, (1946P.20).

showing the historicism but arranged in a manner more usual for the 1830s and 1840s. The Everitt picture probably shows how the room was furnished most of the time and the Katherine Boulton picture shows how it could be arranged, in an historical style, almost like a theatrical stage set.

Ann Boulton, inventory and other papers concerning the furnishing of Thornhill House 1819-28.

When Ann Boulton moved to Thornhill in c. 1819 she employed Bridgens to supply designs and to arrange for furniture and furnishings to be made. Employing Bridgens may have been a practical decision, since he was already involved in working at Thornhill. Perhaps she was also influenced by James Watt's decision to employ him; Ann Boulton and James Watt had intended to marry only a few years earlier.[129] Bridgens' designs for Ann Boulton all date from 1819-22. This was the period when his design work was still influenced by Bullock and before he had evolved his historicist style. His work for Ann Boulton was to provide furnishings that were suited to the lower ceilings and smaller rooms of Thornhill, rather than the monumental Aston Hall.

A photograph of Thornhill from the late nineteenth century shows it to have been a late eighteenth century five bay house with regular fenestration and a central semi-circular porch with Doric columns (see Figure 3:6). On one side of the house was a shallow bay and on the other a deeper bay. A floor plan that survives with the Bridgens' interior designs corresponds with the photograph; the room with the shallow bay was Ann Boulton's drawing room and the larger room, with the deep bay, was the dining room. A small breakfast room was beside the dining room next to the porch.[130] Thornhill was not impressive architecturally, there is no indication

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[129]BRL, Watt papers MII/13/3 letter dated 1810.
[130]A Breakfast Room was not listed in the sale catalogue, instead a Butler's pantry follows the Dining Room with a full list of items, so perhaps this room had a change of use.

that Ann attempted to enhance its appearance to the extent that her father had done at Soho House. However, the interior schemes that Ann Boulton carried out appear to have been extensive and incorporated great style. These schemes can now be considered through the surviving drawings made by Richard Bridgens.

As at Aston Hall for James Watt, Bridgens supplied a number of drawings offering Ann Boulton a choice of Grecian or Egyptian styles, both of which were popular in the early nineteenth century. Designs for chimney pieces were offered in these styles. A number of window treatments, which appear to be for the drawing room suggest various continuous draperies, that is the vertical, hanging curtains, were linked by one horizontal treatment that continued across the piers. The draperies varied in Bridgens' drawings; they were shown with and without a pelmet, pins between the windows, to hold the fabric draped across the top of the windows, or the pole exposed. The detailing on all these designs was in the Grecian style. The exposed pole would have been the strongest Greek Revival choice. Bridgens wrote from London, in March 1822, to apologise to Ann Boulton for the delay in sending the draperies for her drawing room. The letter contained a sketch for how they were to be hung.[131] (Figure 5:8) This sketch shows yet another variation, this time with the pole exposed but from it were suspended fixed draperies, which had extra ornamentation over the piers, and vertical curtains which could be drawn across the windows. Ann Boulton's choice of draperies was in the Grecian style, subdued after the more extravagant draperies of the earlier Regency style, but not extreme.

A water colour painting by Bridgens shows a floor plan of Ann Boulton's drawing room with suggestions for curtains, chimney piece and placing the furniture. A bill dated September 1820 from Bridgens appears to be for this drawing; 'Coloured designs for the arrangement of Drawing room at Thornhill.....5.5.0'.[132] (Figure 5:9)

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[131]BRL, MBP 282/ 13.
[132]BRL, MBP 479.

The curtains in the drawing are similar to the ones chosen by Ann but show the pole completely covered by the fixed drapery. A sofa against one wall shows the square rather squat forms thought to be appropriate for the Grecian style (the sale catalogue described it as an 'Elegant rosewood Grecian sofa'). Two cupboards on either side of the fire place and a cabinet with books and china against another wall, all have anthemian designs on their doors (the sale catalogue refers to it as a chiffonniere in rosewood with satin wood inlays).[133] The colour scheme was in rusty brown and cream. It is clear from the 1822 bill that Ann chose a slightly different curtain arrangement to the one shown in the 1820 plan. It seems likely that this plan gives us a general sense of how her drawing room was furnished. This is confirmed by a water colour drawing dated 1822, this time from architects Richman and Hutchinson, of Birmingham, labelled 'Design for the alterations at Thornhill'. (Figure 5:10) This design has the same chimney piece as Bridgens' 1820 plan and pilasters decorated with anthemian and a Greek key pattern. The colour scheme was in grey and lilac.[134] It seems that Ann Boulton had furnished in a Grecian style in 1820 but was changing the colour scheme two years later.

Ann Boulton was probably influenced by her brother having furniture from Bullock and James Watt employing Bullock and Bridgens. It is possible she was somewhat influenced by Watt's taste for antiques. The slender evidence which suggests this comes from a four page list of tradespeople in London, with comments about their merchandise, given to her by a friend.[135] Included was the entry: 'For Old China.....in Hanway Yard, Oxford Street'. According to Wainwright Hanway Yard

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[133]Sale catalogue BRL, MBP 286/23.

[134]Bristow claims that autumnal colours were favoured in Picturesque schemes but that clearer, brighter colours were favoured in the early nineteenth century when the colours found in the frescos at Pompeii became fashionable. Ian C. Bristow (1996), *Architectural Colour in British Interiors 1615-1840,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, p. 185.

[135]BRL, MBP 479 not dated but it was probably written in 1819 when Ann Boulton moved to Thornhill since over the next few years she does make purchases from some of the recommended tradesmen.

was in the centre of the area favoured by curio shops. Wainwright quotes a description of the street in the 1820s:

> "It was extremely narrow and dirty at the time referred to, but it possessed several attractions. At one corner (and it is still there) was Baldock's old china shop, a sort of museum for Chinese horses and dragons, queer-looking green vases."[136]

It is not known whether Ann Boulton ever visited this shop and made any purchases there but her friend thought she would be sufficiently interested in Baldock's wares to recommend it.

Although influenced by the men in her life Ann Boulton impressed her own personality on her home, choosing fashionable and elegant furnishing schemes in the Grecian style. These schemes made a strong statement without being as austere as the styles recommended by Hope in his *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* of 1807.[137] The colour scheme, of rust and cream, suggested by Bridgens, was found unacceptable and the room was redecorated with quite different colours. A final example of Ann Boulton's taste in furnishing exists among the designs provided by Bridgens. Two designs, one in pen and ink and a second in water colour, show suggestions for a veranda.[138] (Figure 5:11) Although the detailing was different the designs were essentially the same with narrow columns supporting a roof and under it were stands on which to place pots of flowers. At the rear of the construction were three French windows. Laird has traced the development of such extensions to houses and their relationship to both the house and to the garden. He claims that in the later eighteenth century the garden around the house sometimes mirrored the rooms that looked on to it and 'By the Regency period "garden rooms" opening out from the irregular picturesque house promoted a

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[136]Wainwright (1989), p. 35.
[137]Thomas Hope (1807), *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration, Executed from Designs by Thomas Hope,* London: Longman.
[138]BRL, MBP 279.

new sense of space and reciprocal decoration.'[139] It was Humphrey Repton who took things a stage further by surrounding an area with trellis, to suggest a basket and using tall stands with climbing plants or to support pots of plants and flowers. In this way Repton was making the garden an extension of the house; an out door room with French windows connecting the two areas.[140] It would seem that Ann Boulton was attracted to this new arrangement which was not simply a fashion but which invited a different way of using the garden and house.

Taste:

These two examples of second generation entrepreneurs do not appear to have continued the furnishing schemes of the earlier generation. While Ann Boulton generally followed the prevailing fashions, James Watt took a more independent line in the furnishing of his home. Ann Boulton and James Watt seem to have had definite ideas about their homes and how they wished to live. In the case of Watt this involved going some way against fashion, since antique shops and antiquarian interiors were unusual in the 1820s. MacLeod has found that Birmingham entrepreneurs had rather conservative taste, however, James Watt, seems to have reached a level of self confidence that allowed him to develop an individual taste. This was perhaps partly due to Watt being of the second generation of Higher rank status, and the security of a large fortune which took him into the gentry.

The taste of the last two examples, one Higher rank and one of the Lower rank middling sort, will be summarised together.

Richard Pratchett - catalogue for the sale of household furniture of his home in Birmingham in 1824.

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[139]Mark Laird (2000), 'From Bouquets to Baskets', *The Magazine Antiques,* volume 157, number 6, pp. 932-939, p. 934.
[140]Laird (2000), p. 938.

Richard Pratchett had been in business in the centre of Birmingham as a druggist and he retired to his own home in Summer Hill, an attractive area on the north west perimeter of Birmingham, in the early nineteenth century. His house was fashionable and comfortable with rooms with clear uses. His income appears to have been enhanced by owning property in Worcestershire. Among his friends and acquaintances was a clergyman, who was executor of his will, Thomas Kelly Esq. and William MacCready Esq. Pratchett and MacCready were trustees of Kelly's marriage settlement.[141] Pratchett's position as an educated member of the Higher rank middling sort is evident in his choice of books and engravings. Pratchett's books included:

Oxley's Journey in North and South Wales
Woods Beauties of Nature
Robertson's History of Scotland
Cook's Voyages
Don Quixote

Plus Bibles, Sermons, volumes of The Tatler and the New Monthly Magazine.[142] Pratchett's engravings appear to be in keeping with Nenadic's outline of suitable subjects to express Romantic sensibilities in the early nineteenth century. They included:

George III
Duke of Wellington
Lord Nelson
Hon. Spencer Percival
Hon. H.R. Stewart
Hon. Wm. Pitt
Rev. Dr Croft
2 engravings depicting the Departure of the Sons of Tippoo and the Delivery of the Definative Treaty by the Hostage Princes
A pair of prints - Saturday Morning or the Cottager's Merchandise, Saturday Evening or the Husbandman's Return from Labour.

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[141]BRL, MS 39/7; MS 369/10; MS 58/33(2).
[142]BRL, MS1749/1 (6).

Images of royalty, politicians and military subjects were all serious and patriotic themes. Nelson and Wellington were both military heroes who were often the subject of popular prints. So too were the images of Britain's defeat of Tippoo Sultan in India.[143] A strong impression emerges of emotional and nationalistic subjects which Nenadic claimed had Romantic associations that were valued.[144] The last engravings listed have not been traced but the titles suggest early nineteenth century genre paintings that had been translated into engravings for the popular print market. The cottage setting and the implication of a moral tale of hard work rewarded, all point to such a conclusion.

Jonah Bissell- sale catalogue for sale of household furniture from his home and the premises of his metal ware business, 1842.

From the 1841 Census it seems that Bissell was a bachelor or widower with a clerk lodging in his house. Bissell's business was attached to his home in Bradford Street, in the centre of Birmingham and the organisation of his home was in keeping with his Lower rank status. The description of his home in the sale catalogue can now be assessed for any indication of Bissell's taste. The Parlour and Sitting Room furniture was almost all mahogany and therefore smart furniture, although not necessarily up to date. A number of decorative items were listed with detailed descriptions. In the Parlour was:

Timepiece, in spar frame

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[143]Tippoo (or Tipu) Sultan of Mysore had waged war against the East India Company. The Company's army, led by Marquess Wellesley (who later became Duke of Wellington), put down Tippoo, who died in the fighting. James claims that 'the nocturnal scene in which Company officers discovered his body became a favourite with British genre painters.' Tippoo was seen as an oriental despot and the war was 'presented as a contrast between fickle tyranny and civilising order. The point was graphically made by contemporary prints and paintings of Tipu's sons surrendering themselves to the trustworthy and benevolent Company officers.' Lawrence James (1994), *The Rise and Fall of British Empire,* New York: St Martin's Griffin, pp. 132-3.

[144]With reference to national heroes Nenadic specifically names Nelson as a 'romantic' hero. Nenadic (1999), p. 217.

Pair of glazed medallions of George III
Small shell ornaments
Pigeon and bantom cock, in glazed cases
Two paintings of the Woodman
Small japanned paper tray, and oval japanned tray
Capital wheel barometer, by Pedretti
Two best japanned trays upon brass swivel rollers

While the Sitting Room, which appears to be at the back of the house next to the Store Room and Kitchen had:

Japanned hunting tray
Four Britannia metal candlesticks
Spar ornaments
Two stuffed woodcocks, in glazed frames
Capital eight-day clock in polished mahogany case
Small wheel barometer.[145]

As noted Bissell's living rooms did not have clearly differentiated uses, the Parlour appears to have been the 'best room' from its position and the Sitting Room was perhaps a general living room and dining parlour. The disposition of ornaments does not clarify the use of the rooms or their relative status. The symbolic associations of Bissell's home are not easily defined. The medallions of George III were presumably old; Bissell was 69 when he died and George III had been king during the first half of his life. Bissell's book collection was perhaps also in keeping with an elderly man with conservative tastes:

Smith's Map of England and Wales
Dugdale's Antiquities of Warwickshire, with plates, 1745
Dugdale's Correspondence and Life
Chamber's Encyclopaedia of Arts and Sciences, fine plates
Lot of various books.

The japanned and Britannia metal objects were small and relatively inexpensive items that were fashionable at this period. The paintings of the Woodman may have

[145]BRL, MS 319/4, Catalogue for house sale.

been genre pictures. The shell and spar ornaments were items that were popular in the mid nineteenth century along with other natural history objects. Were the stuffed birds part of this popularising of natural history and science? Little has been written on this subject. Country houses often had stuffed animal heads and antlers displayed on walls as trophies of hunting. The popularity of stuffed birds, fish and small animals in glass cases, in middle class homes in the nineteenth century, seems to suggest different concerns. The presence of two cases in each of his living rooms suggests not only a lack of differentiation in use but also a failure to make one room more 'feminine'. This point is reinforced by the presence of a clock and barometer in each room.

Taste:

The similarities between Pratchett and Bissell's homes were the fashionable items; mahogany furniture, ceramics and silver. The dissimilarities were the clear use of Pratchett's living rooms and the confused use in Bissell's home. This was due in part to their differing social status. This difference resulted in a much clearer symbolic use of objects in Pratchett's house; his interests were clearly articulated and this linked him to major artistic and literary movements. Bissell's various interests affected both his living rooms equally but without them imparting a clear taste to either.[146] Bissell's home can be compared with the illustration used by Davidoff and Hall to illustrate middle class interiors. The amateur drawing shows a corner of a farmhouse parlour, of which the authors say; 'The farmer's widow is surrounded by paraphernalia of the middle-class home: barometer, painting, patterned wallpaper, brass fender and carpets'.[147] What Davidoff and Hall do not point out is that this interior, like Bissell's, proclaims its Lower rank status by placing a mixture of objects

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[146]Bissell was a bachelor or widower and no doubt his home reflected his marital as well as his social status. The affect of marital status on homemaking will be considered in Chapter 6 on the Lived Experience.

[147]Davidoff and Hall (1987), plate 21, p. 358.

in the same room; a barometer belonged in the hall, study or dining room but not in the parlour or drawing room. Objects had a symbolic value, individually, but they also acquired additional meanings in combination. Expressions of taste depended crucially on these combinations of objects.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the theoretical frameworks of conspicuous consumption and trickle down are unsatisfactory for explaining consumption trends adequately for the middling sort. While it may be true that certain goods, considered luxuries in the mid eighteenth century, were becoming more widely owned by the end of the century the status connotations of such goods were often limited, due to the circumstances in which they were consumed. Although it might have been important to acquire new goods such as looking glasses, ceramics and clocks it was perhaps even more important to have the appropriate rooms in which to display them. (Figure 5:12) McKendrick's Consumer Revolution[148] with trickle down permeating the classes is an exaggeration of what happened in the West Midlands.

For many of the Higher ranking middling sort a genteel lifestyle that operated in a similar way to the classes above them probably existed with individual variations according to occupation and location. But a significant gap is discernable between the Higher rank and the Lower rank middling sort. This division was implied in Loudon when talking about farmhouses:

> The furniture for the Living and Sleeping Rooms of a Farm House have nothing in them which is peculiar; and therefore we refer our readers to what we have said respecting the furniture of cottages, for farm houses of the smaller size; and to what we shall say of the furniture of villas, for those of a larger description.'[149]

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[148]McKendrick (1982), p. 9.
[149]Loudon (1839), p. 652.

However, it was not so much size as rank that Loudon was referring to, and this distinction applied to more than just farm houses.

For the Lower ranks participating in polite society was extremely limited, according to inventory evidence, not just in terms of important and necessary 'luxuries' but more importantly in the organisation of their homes. It is perhaps worth remembering Nenadic's parsimonious professionals. It seems likely that educated families in Edinburgh would have found less difficulty in mixing with the more extravagant sections of society as equals, since their homes would have been organised on similar lines, if less showy. By contrast the Lower rank middle class were more likely to live and work, in a retailing or artisan occupation, at the same address and they generally had fewer domestic rooms. Therefore making the distinctions between front/back activities were harder and creating rooms with a single function was particularly difficult.

There must also have been particular problems in living in older houses. It was perhaps easier, to make distinctions between rooms and their use, for urban dwellers in newly built properties, that had rooms with a clear purpose. The growth of suburbs, with housing designed specifically for the middle classes, from about the mid century onwards, would have helped in the differentiation of rooms and their uses.[150] This architectural expression of lifestyle is also linked to finer gradations within middling status emerging during the nineteenth century, which Crossick identifies as happening as a result of an increase in white collar occupations and the spread of suburbia from about the 1870s.[151] Therefore the Lower rank middle class

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[150]Cannadine has noted the slow progress of the suburb of Edgbaston, in Birmingham, between 1810 and the 1840s. Building speeded up between the 1840s and 1860 but it was in the 1870s to the end of the century when the suburb took its final shape. Cannadine also notes that within Edgbaston 'zones' opperated to accomodate different levels within the middle class. David Cannadine (1980), *Lords and Landlords: the Aristocracy and the Towns 1774-1967,* Leicester: Leicester University Press, pp. 100-113.

[151]Geoffrey Crossick (1977), 'The emergence of the Lower Middle Class in Britain', in G. Crossick (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914*, London: Croom Helm, p. 15. Crossick also

were the main users of a 'best' parlour in the nineteenth century. Although commentators have used the 'best' parlour to demonstrate the middle class's pretensions to gentility and further evidence of trickle down it should be interpreted as the opposite. Having a 'best' parlour was a mark of limited social exchange; limited to other Lower rank individuals.

The final section of this chapter dealt with taste and the middle class. Nine examples were used for which detailed information was available. There was some evidence of the influence of the Romantic sensibilities identified by Nenadic and the domestic ideology, of the early nineteenth century, identified by Wolff in these examples. However, as in the example of Pakington, élite consumers in the earlier period did not always subscribe totally to neo classicism, so too the later Higher rank middle class people did not wholly embrace the 'domestic' version of Romanticism. Some Higher rank people were wealthy and educated enough, and sufficiently self confident, to create highly individual homes, as in the example of Watt.

Classicism has been designated élite because it depended on education but so too did the 'higher' versions of nineteenth century culture. There are insufficient details here and only one Lower rank example used, to appreciate all the subtle differences, but they probably existed. Just as Williams has noted, with regard to fiction; it was 'only in the second-rate fiction of family-magazine serials and religious or temperance tracts' that the 'explicit, conscious bourgeois values appeared in their purity.'[152] So perhaps this was also the case in how taste was expressed in interiors; it was probably in lower middle class homes that the most explicit bourgeois domesticity was displayed. These examples suggest that matters of taste followed the general pattern already established in this chapter; the gap in consumption for the home was between the Higher rank and Lower rank middling sort (rather than between the

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observes that this strata of the middle class were particularly narrow in their social contacts. Crossick (1977), p. 14.

[152]Raymond Williams quoted in Wolff (1988), p. 129.

aristocratic/gentry homes and those of the middle class). Expressions of taste, through choice of style in interiors and the expression of emotional and symbolic properties in the home, probably adhered to the same pattern with a divide coming most strongly between Higher rank and Lower rank middling sort homes.

SECTION 3

The Influence of the Lived Experience and Gender on Homemaking

Chapter 6

The Lived Experience: Ideals and Reality

Numerous writers have claimed that by the early nineteenth century a clear domestic ideology had evolved that dictated the physical and emotional character of the home.[1] The purpose of this chapter is to propose that much of this secondary literature has produced a stereotypical image of homes of the period. This may be because contemporary advice books are used too uncritically as a source of information and because the image portrayed is accepted as fact, rather than the expression of an ideal impossible for most people to achieve even if they had wished to. The reality was far more diverse in its composition and less harmonious. Some account needs to be given of the advice books published throughout the period, for their content and message, and to see how the stereotype derives from them. Alternative readings of contemporary advice books will then be considered which problematize the genre before going on to consider some examples of homemaking in the West Midlands that did not fit the ideal image.

Published Advice on Homemaking 1760-1860

Published advice, particularly that which was aimed at women, has a long history.[2] Such literature was prescriptive in nature blending practical advice with moralistic teachings and trying to produce not only skilled and thrifty housewives but also 'good

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[1]V. Parker (1970), *The English House in the Nineteenth Century*, London: The Historical Association; J. Calder (1977), *The Victorian Home*, London: Batsford; S. Delamont and L. Duffin (eds) (1978), *The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World*, London: Croom Helm; S. Lasdun (1981), *Victorians at Home*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; C. Hall (1995), *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History,* London: Polity Press.

[2]For example see Marta Ajmar on Renaissance prescriptive literature, 'Toys for Girls; Objects, Women and Memory in the Renaissance Household', M. Kwint, C. Breward & J. Aynsley (eds) *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*, Oxford and New York: Berg, p. 82. For 17th century examples see Kathleen M. Davies (1981), 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage', R.B. Outhwaite (ed.) *Marriage and Society: the Social History of Marriage*, London: Europa.

women'. The popularity of such books is evident in the large number produced: Shoemaker estimates that there were at least 500 published between 1693 and 1760.[3] A continuity is discernible between what was published in earlier periods and during the period 1760 and 1860, although some developments did occur.[4] Advice books may be summarised as taking three forms during the period. Firstly, there were household management books which included some moral conduct. A second category were books which gave prescriptive furnishing advice. And thirdly were books which were solely concerned with giving advice on moral conduct. The first and second categories had some overlaps, however, advice on furnishings was a new development in the early nineteenth century and from about the 1830s books were published which were exclusively on furnishing advice and were virtually devoid of obvious moralistic content. This development tends to be ignored by the historians who have traced the growth of domestic ideology in the nineteenth century. Instead they have concentrated on the third type, the moralistic conduct books, which contained little explicit household management or furnishing advice.[5]

Household management books with advice on moral conduct

An example from the beginning of the period is Mrs Sarah Phillips, of Duke Street, who published *The Ladies Handmaid: or a Compleat System of Cookery on the Principals of Elegance and Frugality*, in 1758.[6] Mrs Phillips said in her preface, addressed to 'the Ladies', that she:

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[3]Some of these were aimed at men. Robert B. Shoemaker (1998), *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850*, London and New York: Longman, p. 21.

[4]Shoemaker points out that some books continued in print, with successive editions, for many years, for example Allestree's *The Ladies Calling* had twelve editions published between 1673 and 1787, while the anonymous author's *New Whole Duty of Man* went through thirty-seven editions between 1744 and 1853. Shoemaker (1998), p. 22.

[5]The third type of advice books, on moralistic conduct, will be dealt with in the section on evaluating advice books.

[6]Sarah Phillips (1758), *The Ladies Handmaid: or a Compleat System of Cookery on the Principals of Elegance and Frugality*, London: J. Coote.

> can venture to assert that those feminine arts practised in the frugal management of the provisions of a family, are of more intrinsic value than some admired branches of literature. Prudence and good management in a family will supply the deficiencies of wealth by dressing and disposing things with economy and elegance.

Mrs Phillips established the 'natural order' by addressing women and those that were catering for a family, maintaining that it should not be beyond the lady of the house to take direction of the running of the household for the family's happiness as well as financial well being.[7] This book is mainly concerned with food preparation along with suggestions for menus and advice on marketing. However, there were sections on the running of a household with information and directions for such things as stain removal, starching, 'To get up Child-bed Linen' and very detailed 'Instructions for Laundry Maids' including leaving the water to stand for three to four days to allow it to settle. Common to such literature was the tendency to insist on extremely high standards, which would have been difficult to achieve in anything less than perfect circumstances.

A typical example from the early nineteenth century which continued in the same vein was Mrs Mary Eaton *The Cook and Housekeeper's Complete and Universal Dictionary, including A System of Modern Cookery in all its various Branches adapted to the use of Private Families,* published in 1823.[8] However, unlike the earlier example this one was explicitly aimed at the housewife in a middle class household. (In the early nineteenth century book publishing in general increased and much of the increase was addressed to the middling sort.) The author condemned other books that were 'chiefly adapted to those who live in "king's houses"' and that

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[7]Susanna Whatman's housekeeping book betrayed just this interest. She was the wife of a wealthy paper manufacturer and kept notes on housekeeping, between 1776 and 1800, for her servants. Whatman's housekeeping book was first published in 1956. S. Whatman (1992), *The Housekeeping Book of Susanna Whatman*, with an introduction by Christina Hardyment, London: Random Century and The National Trust.

[8]Mary Eaton (1823), *The Cook and Housekeeper's Complete and Universal Dictionary, including A System of Modern Cookery in all its various Branches adapted to the use of Private Families,* Bungay.

contain 'french nonsense',[9] as well as young girls who could do nothing 'more than preside over the flippant ceremonies of the tea-table.'[10] The lengthy introduction was all aimed at deflating false pride in the middle classes who put on a 'tinsel show, without the real appropriate distinctions belonging to rank and fortune.'[11]

The moral message of prescriptive literature was also expressed through the format of numerous books which took the form of letters or a conversation. One example was *The Modern Housewife or Ménagère* by Alexis Soyer published in 1849.[12] The book was organised around two couples, one giving and the other seeking advice on homemaking. The conversation was between Mrs B. known to her neighbours as the 'Model Housekeeper', and Mrs L. who was less experienced in homemaking, on the possibility of running a home economically and yet tastefully. The conversation format provided the opportunity of positioning the reader as recipient of Mrs B./the author's wisdom.

A quite different book on household management from the end of the period was Isabella Beeton's *The Book of Household Management*, first published in 1861,[13] which was systematic in its layout rather than in the rambling conversational style. Mrs Beeton was also important for standardising cookery books; with lists of ingredients and simple to follow instructions. While she included much on running a home there was little on choosing furniture and furnishing.

Household management and prescriptive furnishing advice

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[9]Eaton (1823), p. vi.
[10]Eaton (1823), p. vii.
[11]Eaton (1823), p. xxv.
[12]Alexis Soyer (1849), *The Modern Housewife or Ménagère,* London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co.
[13]Isabella Beeton (1861), *The Book of Household Management,* London: Ward, Lock and Co.

One of the earliest advice books which included instructions on furnishing also took the form of a conversation, this was *Domestic Duties,* by Mrs William Parkes, published in 1828. This book consisted of conversations between Mrs B. and Mrs L. Economy was stressed:

> while the affluent may indulge their taste in adding ornament upon ornament, in their houses, and in refining them according to the varying fashion, those of narrow circumstances must restrain their fancies....With them simplicity is good taste.[14]

Yet the advice given was detailed and exacting. As the well informed Mrs B.

decreed:

> It is evident that every room should be furnished in a style not inconsistent with the use for which it is set apart. The dining-room, the place of rendezvous for the *important* concerns of the table, should not be furnished in the light and airy style which you may adopt in your drawing-room, in which amusement and ease are the objects desired.[15]

Rooms with distinct purposes and decorated and furnished accordingly did not leave much room for 'simplicity' except in details. Also the conversational style of writing, already referred to, emphasised the moral obligations of homemaking and the dictatorial nature of the advice.

Much the same message can be found in *The Magazine of Domestic Economy,* published between 1836 and 1842.[16] This monthly magazine published a section devoted to advice on setting up home in September 1840. It made the assumption that its readers were from that 'class of inferior gentry whose income is derived from professions or salaries, or emoluments in business', and 'people of inferior degree'

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[14]Mrs William Parkes (1828), *Domestic Duties or Instructions to Young Married Ladies,* 1st American edition from the 3rd London edition, New York: Harper. p. 168.
[15]Parkes (1828), p. 177-8.
[16]*Magazine of Domestic Economy* (1836-42), London: W.S. Orr and Co.

would have to follow their instructions as best they could. The advice was consistently to buy:

> as good quality as the purchaser can possibly afford in the first instance, and procured with the view to an improvement in his condition. All young people who have a fair start in the world naturally entertain the hope of advancement, and therefore every article should be purchased with a view to this.

Buying cheaper goods would be a false economy and the article goes on to recommend the best quality in; 'Chairs, tables, sofas, curtains, side-boards.....' and 'plate above all things that a false economy is often practised'.[17] Although the advice appeared to be practical, there was perhaps also social pressure being applied. This article was addressed to couples acquiring a home for the first time and therefore it stressed the importance of getting it right.

J. C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture,* and *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion,* published in 1833 and 1838 respectively,[18] were aimed as much at men as at women. Loudon was comprehensive and thorough in the subjects he covered and in the amount of detail. While these two publications appear to be informative and educational the underlying message was to improve 'taste' in architecture and furniture etc. His advice was prescriptive and adhered to the usual formula for the various rooms, for example the dining room needed a recess for the sideboard; 'some architectural preparation should be made to receive it' with a chimney piece that was 'bold and massive' with dark wood for the shutters, mahogany furniture and moreen curtains in scarlet or 'fawn colour, with broad lace and fringing.'[19] While the drawing room should be cheerful, 'elegant and

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[17] *Magazine of Domestic Economy* (September, 1840), pp. 65-67.
[18] J.C. Loudon (1839), *Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture* [1833], London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman; J.C. Loudon (1838), *The Suburban Gardner and Villa Companion,* London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman.
[19] Loudon (1838), p. 86.

even splendid, but chaste, and not gorgeous.[20] After making many exacting comments about decoration and furnishings, although still including some confusion about the degree of lavishness, Loudon concluded with the comment that 'The principle order requires that the finest rooms should have the best furniture' and the 'strength, plainness, or ornament, [should be suited] to the room in which it is to be used.'[21] The reader was left with no doubt that very exacting standards were necessary but whether they would have the 'taste' to achieve them was debatable.

Loudon was read widely and his influence also spread to other publications, for example some of his illustrations seem to have been copied by Webster and Parkes in *An Encyclopedia of Domestic Economy,* published in 1845. The newly married couple were the presumed readers as the Preface declared:

> the editor was of the opinion that collecting in one work the various articles of household furniture would be useful to those who are beginning housekeeping, to whom the greatest part of the work is particularly addressed.[22]

As with the other examples it was informative, giving definitions of furnishings such as types of curtain fabric and carpet and the uses of different items of furniture, but it ended up being prescriptive. Simply by giving a few examples of everything it appeared to recommend them. So for example, on page 273 were drawings of chairs with the comment 'Figs. 274, 275, 276, 277, 278 are some of the most approved forms now in use.' Despite the prescriptive aspect of Parkes and Webster the information was clearly laid out and comprehensive in nature.

A mixed audience and one that was Lower rank middle class appears to be addressed in Cassell's *Household Guide* published in monthly parts in the 1870s with frankly

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[20]Loudon (1838), p. 96.
[21]Loudon (1838), p. 128.
[22]Thomas Webster, assisted by Mrs Parkes (1845), *An Encyclopedia of Domestic Economy*, New York: Harper (from the London edition), p. viii.

economical solutions to furnishing problems. Two suggestions were for 'Makeshift Furniture' and 'Some Cheap Comforts'.[23] However the cross overs with the advice and conduct books was still in evidence since this magazine also included numerous articles on etiquette for the ill informed middle classes.

The nature of these publications became more distinct with regard to their target audience and the format used. There was a tendency to become more comprehensive in the subject matter. Thus a parallel can be seen with the household management books which culminated with Mrs Beeton. A more down-to-earth approach was also increasingly taken and this was evident in a number of advice books which purported to be aimed at people of a particular income level such as Mrs Eliza Warren's *How I Managed My House on Two Hundred Pounds a Year*, published in 1865.[24]

The later advice books on furnishing offered a strict formula of room types and how to decorate and furnish them. While not using the heavy moralistic tone of some advice books the information appears to have carried the additional burden of achieving the 'correct' interior. Lack of money would have prevented readers obtaining the right furniture and furnishings, to produce the different styles of living room. Equally problematic, and harder to define was the matter of 'taste'. It must have been difficult to achieve display on a limited budget and without appearing vulgar.

A particular picture of the early nineteenth century home of the middling sort emerges from secondary literature; a picture made up of physical elements and emotional attributes attached to them. The emotional aspect is characterised by the assumption that a heavily moralistic tone prevailed in the home and surrounding the

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[23]*Cassell's Household Guide*, (volumes 1-4) (1870-74), London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, volume 1, p. 312 and volume 3, p. 212.

[24]Quoted in Patricia Branca (1974), 'Image and Reality: The Myth of the Idle Victorian Woman' in Mary S. Hartman and Lois Banner (eds), *Clio's Consciousness Raised,* New York: Harper, p. 182.

family which lived in it. The assumption was that each household conformed to the ideal consisting of husband, wife, several children still living at home and a live-in servant or two and that the family would adhere to prescribed advice on interiors.

The Stereotypical Image in Secondary Literature Derived from Advice Books

One of the major proponents of the existence of the moral home has been Catherine Hall who has published a number of books and articles on the influence of Evangelicalism on homemaking practice. In *White, Male and Middle Class,* Hall details the 'Evangelical ideology of domesticity',[25] which was so powerful and successful that it 'ensured that notions of home and domesticity in the nineteenth century would be heavily influenced by the Mores, Gisbornes, and Thorntons of this world.'[26] It is interesting to note that one of the people whose inventory has been studied here, Mr Pratchett, in Birmingham, possessed a copy of Hannah More's novel *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*. However, he also had William Cobbett's *Year's Residence in America.* As a radical Cobbett, according to Hall, took a different stance.[27] While members of the Clapham Sect might have followed Evangelical precepts to the letter, most people probably did not.

Vickery has been critical of this linking of domestic ideology with the early nineteenth century, the rise of the middle class and Evangelicalism. She points out that texts with a similar message existed much earlier, that the role of Evangelicalism is not so clear cut as many writers claim and that 'it would be a mistake to see

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[25]Hall (1995), p. 90.
[26]All three were members of the Clapham Sect and therefore at the forefront of the Evangelical movement. Hall (1995), p. 91.
[27]Hall (1995), p. 76.

Evangelical enthusiasm thriving in every middle-class home, just because the history of the tepid, the backsliding and the utterly indifferent nineteenth-century household remains to be written.'[28] Wahrman has made similar comments on this linking of domestic ideology during the period, with the emergence of a middle class influenced by Evangelical teachings. Wahrman demonstrates that Evangelicals such as Hannah More were critical of the middle class, because the vices of the upper class were adopted by those below them in the social hierarchy[29] and that 'Before the 1830s there was nothing self-evident about a connection between the "middle class" and the domestic sphere.'[30] Wahrman claims that this connection only developed after the cultural changes that occurred in the wake of the Reform Bill of 1832.

The early nineteenth century home is generally portrayed as a family home and the furniture and furnishings are seen as a backdrop for the domestic drama to be played out. For example Davidoff and Hall in *Family Fortunes* concentrate on the way families functioned, which included the organisation and the subsequent meaning of the home; 'middle-class housing had to provide more than just a haven for family withdrawal for the home was also a stage for social ritual and outward manifestation of status in the community.'[31] However, although many people may have matched the 'ideal' at one period of their lives, no one fitted it throughout their life time. The reality was a far more mixed assortment of families, bachelors, spinsters, elderly couples or widowed men and women.

The organisation of the house often fell short of the 'ideal' as well as the family which occupied it. The stereotypical image derived from advice books is that people

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[28]Amanda Vickery (1993), 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, volume 36, number 2, pp. 383-414, p. 398.
[29]D. Wahrman (1995), *Imagining the Middle Class: The political representation of class in Britain c. 1780-1840*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 396.
[30]Wahrman (1995), p. 381.
[31]Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall (1987), *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850,* London: Routledge, p. 362.

purchased a complete home when they married and that this home conformed to a standardised configuration. These points are expanded on by Phillipa Tristram in *Living Space: in fact and fiction*[32] which looks at the 'messages' of interiors as described in novels and uses advice books for evidence of homemaking and how the two literary forms complemented each other. What Tristram fails to acknowledge is that both novels and advice books were constructions of ideals rather than of practice.

Evaluating Advice Books

What is required is a more questioning approach to how advice books were 'read'. While cultural studies has produced numerous texts on recent media forms and audience mediation of them, little work has as yet been done on eighteenth and nineteenth century advice books. There were various elements within the genre; they varied in the subjects they covered, their comprehensivness and the degree of practicality of their advice. The format also varied, with some overlapping with magazines particularly by the mid nineteenth century. This variety needs to be taken into account to analyse advice books fully. No extensive study of advice books has been written, however, a few authors offer some guidance and their observations can be incorporated here.

Branca has warned against taking the notion of the 'perfect lady' at face value; that while the prescriptive literature extolled her virtues the nineteenth century reader mediated the image they were presented with. This Branca claims has not been appreciated by recent historians including feminists who 'have found the image

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[32]Phillipa Tristram (1989), *Living Space: in fact and fiction*, London: Routledge. A similar problem is present in the work of Kowaleski-Wallace, see Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace (1997), *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping and Business in the Eighteenth Century*, New York: Columbia University Press.

reasonable, however insulting it may be to Victorian women themselves, because it explains the source of the reaction that produced a large-scale feminist movement.[33] Branca argues that there must have been a discrepancy between the picture painted by advice books and the reality for most women and their families, of the middling sort. For example a good income was necessary to realise the 'perfect lady' image. Mrs Isabella Beeton's book although full of practical advice, assumed that the housewife would have a high income to live on since 'Her main duties were supervising the servants, seeing that the children were properly attended to by the nurse, making and receiving calls from her friends, and attending and giving lavish dinner parties.'[34] This contrasted with the image from another advice book by Mrs Eliza Warren *How I Managed My House on Two Hundred Pounds a Year* which suggested that:

> the average day of the mistress of the house was filled with housework, washing, cooking, crying children, shopping, quarrelling with the maid, and managing financial problems. Both women claimed to be speaking to the middle-class housewife, but obviously they were not talking about the same woman.[35]

Branca then makes the point that the middle class incorporated people with a wide range of incomes and those with £300 a year and over, the readers of Mrs Beeton she implies, were a small group amounting to 9.7% of the class in the 1860s.[36] The other misconception that Branca points out is the assumption that nineteenth century women could depend on a large number of servants to help them run their houses when the reality was that the majority of women could expect no more than a general servant; typically a young girl who was untrained in the finer points of domestic work.[37] This again meant that the middle class housewife was a busy woman and

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[33]Branca (1974), p. 181.
[34]Branca (1974), p. 182.
[35]Branca (1974), p. 182.
[36]Branca (1974), p. 183.
[37]Branca (1974), p. 187.

'probably far too absorbed in the affairs of the house caring for her husband and children to worry about an image they could not attain.'[38]

Branca's message is a useful starting point for evaluating advice books since her main message is to caution against accepting the stereotypical image. But we also need to consider how advice books were 'read' or mediated by their readers. Vickery offers a few comments on this aspect. She asks:

> Did the sermonizers have any personal experience of marriage? Did men and women actually conform to prescribed models of authority? Did prescriptive literature contain more than one ideological message? Did women deploy the rhetoric of submission selectively, with irony, or quite cynically?[39]

The most moralising of the advice literature were the publications which overlapped with conduct books. Perhaps the most significant of these were the ones written by Mrs Ellis; *The Women of England* and *The Daughters of England.*[40] Mrs Ellis was a Congregationalist involved in temperance and missionary work and her religious view point was strongly in evidence in her publications. According to Evangelical thinking women should fulfil their roles as wives, daughters and mothers displaying the peculiarly female virtues of modesty, meekness, patience and obedience.[41] Such publications were full of moral advice on homemaking but only added confusion to the practical decision making that was required, giving such advice as:

> where the members of a household are made to feel that they pay too dearly, by the loss of their peace and comfort, for the cleanliness, order, and punctuality of

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[38]Branca (1974), p. 189.
[39]Vickery (1993), 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?', p. 385.
[40]Mrs Ellis (1844), *Family Monitor and Domestic Guide: The Women of England their Social Duties and Domestic Habits,* New York: Henry G. Lanley; Mrs Ellis (1845), *The Daughters of England,* London and Paris: Fisher, Son and Co. In the preface of *The Daughters of England* Mrs Ellis claimed that *The Women of England* had been so well received that she proposed further volumes to deal with the various 'eras in women's personal experience'. Further volumes were promised on wives and on mothers.
[41]Shoemaker (1998), p. 23.

> the mistress, all claim on her part to the merit of good management must be relinquished.[42]

The message of such books was clearly moralistic, but they were the least practical and therefore the most difficult to translate into the reality of daily life. This may have meant they were read in an entirely different way to the more practical style of advice book.[43]

The most useful text on mediation of advice books comes from Beetham, even though her work has been on women's magazines which had a different format and therefore not all of her points apply. Beetham makes her position clear in her introduction where she is critical of writers who produce a stereotypical image from nineteenth century sources. Beetham says:

> I do not read the magazines of the last century exclusively as instruments of a pervasive domestic ideology and a regime of sexual repression.....Popular print is too complex a phenomenon to be understood in the simplistic terms of 'patriarchy' or of 'class', and theories of gender which construct women only as victims of repression are theoretically and politically suspect.[44]

Beetham's over-riding message is that the women's magazines contained a variety of messages, and even more importantly, conflicting messages. This increased so that by the advent of *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine,* edited jointly by the Beeton husband and wife team, in 1852 the emphasis on women in the 'domestic realm' could sit along side editorials that endorsed John Stuart Mill's ideas and therefore 'allowed very different models of femininity to coexist on its pages'.[45] Here the overlaps with advice books are very pronounced. Beetham suggests that, unlike

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[42]Ellis (1844), p. 77.
[43]Wahrman is critical of Davidoff and Hall (1987), for quoting Mrs Ellis extensively. Wahrman (1995), p. 405.
[44]Margaret Beetham (1996), *A Magazine of Her Own?*, London: Routledge, p. 2.
[45]Beetham (1996), p. 61.

the earlier moralising in ladies magazines and conduct books, the newer publications moved:

> away from moral generalities towards materiality and detail. Isabella's recipes for example, were marked by a combination of precision and standardisation, with systematic presentation of ingredients and method which has been standard ever since. Instead of the heart, the crucial organs here were the hands and the brain; instead of moral self-examination, the acquisition of practical skills and systematic knowledge.

Beetham goes on to say that this tendency redefined the 'work of domesticity' and professionalised 'the idea of domestic management'.[46]

Homemaking in Practice

The central idea of this chapter is that advice books should not be seen as reflecting actual homemaking practice. Many people's household did not constitute the 'ideal', how then did they organise their homes? What were the less than ideal methods resorted to by families and individuals to acquire the furnishings for their homes?

Old age and second marriages

The advice books suggest that the right time to acquire the ideal home was on marriage when the couple began housekeeping together. This would require a large outlay and no doubt many couples were not able to furnish their homes to a high standard in the first years of marriage. At a later date they perhaps replaced objects with better quality ones as their circumstances allowed. This was the case with Matthew Boulton who bought all new furnishings when he rebuilt Soho House, in middle age and after his wife had died. Ann Boulton was also middle aged when she

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[46]Beetham (1996), p. 66.

decided to move from her old home, by then her brother's, and begin afresh at Thornhill House. The Boultons' wholesale style of furnishing their homes gave them a fashionable interior which matched their elevated position but which rid the home of many of its old material culture associations.

In contrast to the Boulton's style of furnishing were couples, and widows and widowers, who retained their furnishings for many years, making only minor changes. Perhaps these people had furnished early on in their married life and purchased goods that were fashionable but by retaining them their homes became increasingly old fashioned. While lack of money would be one reason to do this another explanation would be the wish to retain the familiar goods with emotional associations.[47] An example of this type of household is provided by John Staunton. This gentleman appears to have had a good income and good social position and yet when he married Anne Inge in 1800[48] he appears to have made few changes to his home.[49] Various reasons can be put forward to explain this; John Staunton was 65 when he married Anne and he had lived in his house at Kenilworth for many years. Anne was his second wife; John Staunton had first married when he was about 29 and had brought up a family with his first wife. Was it important to him to preserve his earlier home or was the impetus to create a new home less for a second marriage?

It has been suggested in Chapter 5 that Staunton's background as a member of the gentry and an ancient family may have influenced his attitude to homemaking. Mandler and Colley have suggested that during this period members of the landed

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[47]See Amanda Vickery (1993), 'Women and the world of goods: a Lancashire consumer and her possessions, 1751-81', in John Brewer and Roy Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods,* London: Routledge.

[48]It is not certain when John Staunton and Anne Inge married. Burke states 1801 and yet the account book, begun in 1800, refers to her from the outset. John Burke (1837), *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry,* London: Henry Colburn. The IGI records a John Staunton marrying Ann Inge in Coventry in 1788. The Inges lived in Coventry so this may well have been the same people. Whichever date is correct this was still a second marriage which did not produce children and John Staunton was aged between 53 and 65 when the marriage took place.

[49]Information from account book BRL, 397971.

élite were becoming more domestic.[50] Such developments seem to be reflected in the homemaking of Thomas Bowyer Adderley on his marriage to Julia Leigh in 1842. In a letter to Julia, a few months before their marriage, Adderley wrote:

> I fancy the cottages of Lea daily getting neater and happier-looking, and their gardens as well as their faces smiling under the influence of their new guardian. Though there must be no distinction between what is mine and what is yours, and yours mine - yourself in the bargain - yet I think it will be an admirable plan that you should have the entire care and management of the villages - the schools and clubs and cottages. What say you? I think it would be a good thing for you to feel that the entire responsibility of the interests of the poor around Hams rested in your hands.....and all the good done amongst the villagers should be identified with your name.....I quite agree with you as to our soon settling at Hams. Tell me every plan that you would like, that I may arrange it. I am sure we shall hit upon the same ideas in every plan, for I see that in all things we think alike.[51]

As already noted, Adderley sold off goods in a house sale when he took over Hams Hall, when he came of age. It seems likely that a good deal of refurnishing took place at the time of his marriage and that his wife took an active role in the process.

The Transient Home

Evidence suggests that people often chose to change their residence and sell up its contents. Newspaper advertisements for house sales are useful here since they sometimes gave a reason for the sale. Some examples of this are; Avery Homer a tanner who was declining housekeeping and retiring, Mr Ward, machinist, who was leaving Birmingham, Samuel Hyam Esq., who had changed his private residence, the Rev Mr Huntley, who was going to reside in Oxfordshire, Joseph Hunt a gunsmith, who was going to reside in London, Mr W. Steel of Wolverley, in Worcestershire,

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[50]Referred to in Wahrman (1995), pp. 379-80.
[51]William S. Childe-Pemberton (1909), *Life of Lord Norton (Right Hon. Sir Charles Adderley, KCMG, MP) 1814-1905*, London: John Murray, pp. 44-5.

who was changing his residence and finally Fairfax Moresby Esq. who was changing his residence.[52]

Since most of the examples were Higher rank middling sort or gentry families, we can assume that in many instances people chose to sell up when they moved rather than being forced to. Perhaps the move was the occasion for acquiring newer and more fashionable furniture and furnishings. It must often have been the case that people found it easier and cheaper to sell up and start again rather than go to the trouble and expense of packing up goods and sending them to another town. However, financial problems were also directly responsible for occasioning house sales. Thomas Francis of Edgbaston, the select suburb in Birmingham, had to suffer the indignity of newspaper notices advertising his home for sale due to his bankruptcy.[53] Thomas Blythe Harries, the heir of the ancient Benthall estate was forced to sell up twice due to his enormous debts, the first time at the Hall itself and then a few years later at Broseley Hall.[54] Other examples of people with financial difficulties were Richard Evason a tenant farmer whose inventory was made when he was declared bankrupt.[55] Richard Grevis, Hannah and Catherine Poyner and Ann Devey,[56] had inventories made on their death, but their belongings were in jeopardy due to debts, so their goods would probably have been sold up rather than have gone to their family and friends.

Second Hand and Rented furnishings

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[52]Mr Ward's inventory was an auctioneer's notice the rest were newspaper advertisements for house sales. See Chapter 3 for individual references.
[53]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 1/10/1849.
[54]Details of bankruptcy, VCH, *Shropshire*, volume 4, pp. 209-10.
[55]SRO, 6000/17750.
[56]Wanklyn (1998), p. 393; LJRO probate inventories.

The newspaper advertisements and auctioneer notices for house sales provide clear evidence of a huge amount of second-hand goods in circulation. Indeed the rapid increase in furniture brokers, particularly for the larger towns studied here, also indicates a good trade in second-hand furniture, although furniture brokers also sold new goods of lesser quality. While much of this trade catered for working class customers, it seems likely that middling sort people also resorted to second-hand goods.

Nenadic suggests that second-hand goods became less desirable. In the later eighteenth century she claims that 'When new, these articles had been produced for a middle-rank market and they were, in effect being recycled within that market.' However by the 1820s Nenadic says that purchasing second-hand goods reflected a lack of interest in fashion and style content, since 'it was much more likely that working people would be able to purchase second-hand goods that had once belonged to the relatively wealthy'.[57] But by this date the middle class no longer wished to purchase such goods and although furniture might retain and even increase in value, this was due to its use value and high content of wood, that might be made over into other items. However, both the published advice on homemaking and examples of West Midlands consumers engaged in homemaking, point to second-hand and even rented furniture continuing to be common, for middling consumers, throughout the period.

Books and periodicals from 1829, 1840 and 1870 can be used to demonstrate the proliferation of advice on acquiring second-hand furniture and the nature of that advice. *The Home Book* was published in 1829, and the author, 'A Lady', warned people who were new to homemaking about the pitfalls of purchasing goods second-

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[57]Stena Nenadic (1994), 'Middle-rank Consumers and Domestic Culture in Edinburgh and Glasow 1720-1840', *Past and Present,* number 145, pp. 122-156, pp. 132-3.

hand. Those who thought that a house could be furnished 'in a superior style, at a very modest expense' by going to auctions, should know that:

> a young person is in great danger of being drawn on, by the artful dealers who attend such sales, to continue bidding for an article which pleases the fancy, till at last it becomes his property at a price far beyond that for which it might be purchased of a regular tradesman.[58]

The author concedes that good quality articles might be obtained in this way but that the homemakers would need a friend with some experience to advice them. The same was true of purchasing goods from furniture brokers. *The Home Book* concluded that unless economy was of paramount importance it was better to go to a 'respectable manufacturer' to purchase what was required. While this was a cautionary tale the book makes it clear that auctions and second-hand dealers were resorted to by middle class customers.

Other pitfalls were outlined in *The Magazine of Domestic Economy* in several articles on furnishing a house in 1840. The homemaker was told that they should purchase the best that they could afford partly because such goods would fetch a reasonable price if resold.[59] While the purchase of second-hand items was not dealt with, one article went into great detail about the problems of purchasing new goods since so many items were veneered and unscrupulous manufacturers used unseasoned wood which would split. Apart from the advice to go to a 'trader of known probity' readers were advised to purchase items 'which had been sometime on sale; because the chances are that the union of the two woods will be thoroughly effected.'[60] It would appear that the purchase of second-hand furniture, particularly that made in solid timber, was no more risky than purchasing new.

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[58]A Lady (1829), *The Home Book: or Young Housekeeper's Assistant*, London: Smith Elder and Co., p. 107.
[59]*The Magazine of Domestic Economy* (1840), London: W. S. Orr and Co., p. 65.
[60]*The Magazine of Domestic Economy* (1840), p. 345.

Cassels's Household Guide was probably aimed at a Lower middle class readership and included articles on making blacking, instructions for removing grease from carpets and one on 'Choosing a Trade: Watchmaking'. Its hints on choosing furniture were practical and economical. For example on 'Hiring Furniture' they said:

> Sometimes, where people cannot be sure of permanent employment in the same place, it may be advisable to hire, not purchase, furniture. This can always be done by applying to a broker, who for new articles, will charge 20 per cent. on the value, for secondhand about 10; the repairs come out of his pocket, but the owner bears the loss of the ordinary wear and tear.

The magazine stated that hiring furniture in this way was better than buying it only to resell at a loss. It was also better to hire and then gradually replace with items bought with cash rather than running up debts.[61] In a short article on 'Brokers' Furniture' they stated; 'Never buy furniture at a broker's unless you are judge enough to understand thoroughly what constitutes good workmanship'. The advice repeats that given in 1829 and 1840; ask a friend for advice and go to a 'respectable dealer'.[62]

Evidence of who bought second-hand goods and who hired furniture is fragmentary but sufficient exists to suggest that such practices were wide spread and continued throughout the period. For example the wording of the advertisements for house sales in both the *Salopian Journal* and Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* seem to remain remarkably similar throughout the period, suggesting that they appealed to a similar readership. In the advertisement for the sale of furniture belonging to Mr J.W. Philipson of Selly Hall in Worcestershire in 1835 the Auctioneer charged 6d for catalogues, which seems far too expensive for working class people to afford.[63]

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[61]*Cassell's Household Guide,* volume 1 (1870), London: Cassell, Petter and Gilpin, p. 312.
[62]*Cassell's Household Guide* (1870), p. 362.
[63]Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 11/5/1835.

The practice of hiring furniture was described by the cabinet maker Hopkinson, when he was working for a firm in Nottingham in the late 1830s. Twice he was sent, with other workers, to collect furniture from customers who had not kept up their payments. In both cases the customer was a clergyman and therefore classed as Higher rank middling sort. Hopkinson makes it clear that it was not only furniture that was hired, but virtually the entire contents of the house, including blankets, drugget and carpets. One of these customers came to the shop the next day and:

> paid up what he owed *like a man*, and was very civil, and made arrangements to have them polished and sent back again in a *week* before his boarders who were gone home on their Christmas holidays, should return to school. We understand he gave it out that the things had been sent to Nottingham to be repaired.[64]

Hiring furniture clearly allowed this man to present the prosperous and genteel image that was required by the parents of his boarders. Hopkinson also commented on purchasing goods at auctions. He would have done well to have read *The Home Book* before setting up in business on his own in 1851, since he fell into the trap of purchasing goods from 'an artful dealer'. Hopkinson wanted to fill his showroom and did not have sufficient items that he had made, so he went to an auction and bought, what he thought were second-hand and good quality pieces, only to find that they were new, slop-made goods. The furniture had been darkened to look old and the auction room was poorly lit. He had difficulty reselling the furniture.[65]

An example of a customer purchasing a second-hand item is provided by Matthew Robinson Boulton. In September 1837 Boulton's housekeeper, Mrs Wilkinson, wrote to Mr Westley, the agent at Soho House, that the family needed a Sofa:

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[64]Jocelyne Baty Goodman (ed.) (1968), *Victorian Cabinet Maker: the Memoirs of James Hopkinson 1819-1894*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 36.
[65]Goodman (1968), p. 96.

> we will look out for another at a sale, and should one be met with in this neighbourhood first we will appraise you - and you must do the same, should you find one that is reasonable. It is wanted for an ordinary room and provided it is a good length to lie on say 6ft, no matter for the fashion of it.[66]

In November Mrs Wilkinson wrote again on the subject; 'Do not look out for a Sofa - we have just heard of one at Banbury which will suit our purpose and comes over next week.' Although only for an 'ordinary' room this sofa was intended for the family's use rather than for servants. Boulton was a wealthy man with a well furnished home and yet he resorted to second hand goods on occasion and went to some trouble to get the right object. The process saved money but was still a method for obtaining objects which corresponded well to requirements.

The meaning and status of such goods is not clear and little work on the second-hand trade has been done. All goods acquired a new set of meanings when purchased second-hand and lost the meaning they possessed for their original owner. It is possible that good quality, if slightly old, goods were seen as desirable since they carried status with their patina. If items were not inherited then second hand may have provided instant pedigree. This would also have fitted with the notion of building up a home to embody emotional as well as physical domestic ideals. Ruskin's condemnation of the household depicted in Holman Hunt's painting The Awakening Conscience was that the furniture betrayed the couple's immoral situation in the 'fatal newness' of its contents.[67] McCracken suggests that patina ceased to be valued, in the eighteenth century, since at that time new and fashionable goods became more desirable than those that suggested long standing wealth and prestige.[68]

This section has shown that second-hand goods were commonly resorted to by

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[66]BRL, MBP 438.

[67]Ruskin's letter to *The Times* is reproduced in Caroline Arscott, 'Employer, husband, spectator: Thomas Fairburn's commission of The Awakening Conscience', J, Wolff and J. Seed (eds) (1988), *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-century Middle Class*, Manchester : Manchester University Press, p. 172-3.

[68]Grant McCracken (1988), *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities,* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p. 39.

middling sort customers, throughout the period. While such goods may have not presented the ideal situation for acquiring a home they did carry associations of quality with them which homemakers could incorporate into their personal and individual home circumstances.[69]

The Households of Spinsters, Widows and Bachelors

A significant number of households were not made up of families. It is useful therefore to consider the homes, first of spinsters and widows, and then of bachelors, to see if there is any indication of special characteristics to these households. Lawrence Stone notes that in the eighteenth century there was an increase in the number of unmarried people within the middling sort.[70] Barbara Todd also claims that by the nineteenth century the remarriage of widows was very low.[71] Since middling rank women were limited in the occupations that were acceptable for them to pursue, having an adequate income for extended homemaking was a problem. In addition their status as women limited their participation in society, which may have affected the arrangement of their homes. On the other hand it may be the case that as independent women they took the opportunity to emphasise certain aspects of homemaking.

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[69]For an examination of the meaning of objects not being fixed see Igor Kopytoff (1988), 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 66-67.
[70]Lawrence Stone (1979), *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 243.
[71]By the mid 19th century the remarriage of widows and widowers combined was only 11.27% and rates for widows was lower. Barbara J. Todd (1996), 'The Remarrying Widow: a Stereotype Reconsidered', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society 1500-1800*, London: Routledge, p. 56.

Table 6:1 Independent Women.

No.	Name	Location	Status	Date
1	Elizabeth Mugg	Bridgnorth	Widow	1760
2	Mary Rowley	Bridgnorth	Widow	1762
3	Margaret Higginson	Bridgnorth	Widow	1762
4	Ann Rowley	Bridgnorth	Widow	1762
5	Mary Lacon	Bridgnorth	Widow	1763
6	Catherine & Hannah Poyner	Bridgnorth	Spinsters	1765
7	Elizabeth Foxall	Bridgnorth	Widow	1766
8	Margaret Lamb	Bridgnorth	Widow	1767
9	Ann Devey	Bridgnorth	Widow	1767
10	Elizabeth Jeffries	Bridgnorth	Widow	1768
11	Susanna Marrian	Salop	Widow	1770
12	Catherine Brown	Bridgnorth	Widow	1774
13	Mrs White	Bridgnorth	Widow	1790
14	Susanna Seager	Kinver	Spinster	1796
15	Jane Browne	Bridgnorth	Widow	1797
16	Ann Fox	Cleobury Mortimer	Spinster	1813
17	Ann Chandler	Shrewsbury	Widow	1814
18	Ann Boulton	Birmingham	Spinster	1829
19	Miss Mayor	Shrewsbury	Spinster	1831

Table: 6:2 Ownership of selected goods by independent women, 1760-1831.

Object	1760-1797	1813-1831
New commodities		
Saucepans	6, 7, 11	16. 18
Earthenware	6, 10, 11, 12, 15	16, 17, 18
Books	6, 11	17, 19
Clocks	2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 15	16, 17, 18, 19
Pictures	4, 6, 10, 11, 12	17, 18
Looking glasses	3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	16, 17, 19
Curtains	6, 9, 11	16, 17, 18
Knives & forks	6, 11	16, 17
China	6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15	16, 17, 18
Hot drink utensils	1, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15	16, 17, 18
Silver	4, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15	18
Carpets		16, 18, 19
Sofas		18, 19
Cotton furnishings		16, 18
Small mahogany items	6, 11, 15	16, 17, 18
Mahogany furniture	6, 13, 14	16, 17, 18, 19
Drinking glasses	4, 6, 11, 13, 15	16, 17, 18
Old commodities		
Pewter	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15	16
Delft ware	1, 6, 9, 11, 15	
Forms/benches	2, 11, 15	
Trenchers	1, 2, 3, 12, 15	
Buffets		

In Table 6:1 the independent women were more heavily weighted to the earlier period and many were from Bridgnorth[72] therefore we could expect them to be slightly below average in their belongings. In fact comparing the number of women owning each category of good with Table 5:4 which used predominantly male inventories, produces very similar figures. The women did less well for earthenware, books, carpets, sofas, cotton furnishings and small mahogany items. Carpets, sofas and cotton furnishings are explained by the earlier period for most of the inventories when it would be less likely for middling rank people to own such goods. The lack of small mahogany items is less easy to explain since the women were slightly more

[72]This was due to the continuation of Peculiar Courts to make probate inventories.

inclined to own mahogany furniture. The fewer instances of earthenware but slightly higher ownership of trenchers, is surprising since it would perhaps be expected that women would acquire ceramics, given the assumption that women were the main consumers of ceramics and tea and coffee goods.

These findings are in line with Weatherill's work comparing male and female ownership of goods for the earlier period of the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century.[73] Weatherill discovered no significant difference in most geographical areas and for most of the goods that she looked for, leading her to conclude that there was no evidence of a 'separate female material culture'. However, the instance of individual items in someone's home does not tell us how the items contributed to the overall organisation of the home or the meaning they had for their owners. Berg's study of wills made by women in the later eighteenth century suggests that although ownership of goods may have been similar women invested goods with rather different symbolic values to men.[74] Unlike wills, probate inventories were not written by the individuals themselves, but were made after their death, for legal reasons. The individual was not involved in describing their home's contents, the representation of the home was made by another person.[75] The few inventories of independent women to be considered here will be closely scrutinised to ascertain how these homes were viewed by the maker of the inventory and how the individual goods may have contributed to the material culture of these women's lives.

Taken as a group these were some of the poorest inventories looked at, some were worth just a few pounds; Higginson, Rowley, Lamb, Lacon and Foxall each had few

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[73]Lorna Weatherill (1986), 'A Possession of One's Own: Women and Consumer behavior in England, 1660-1740', *Journal of British Studies*, volume 25, pp. 131-156,p. 132.
[74]Maxine Berg (1996), 'Women's Consumption and the Industrial Classes of Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of Social History,* volume 30, number 2, pp. 415-434, p. 421.
[75]Pointon has made the point that 'history often works on the basis of an assumption that description is access, whereas description is, of course, representation.' Marcia Pointon (1997), *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800,* London: Oxford University Press, p. 9.

belongings, worth between £3 and £12. Margaret Higginson's was the most telling in this respect with almost every item described as 'old' 'small' or 'little'. A section of her inventory reads:

a small butter tub	0.01.06
an old warming pan and frying pan	0.01.00
an old joyned stool	0.01.06
an old chair	0.00.08
an old cast mettle boiler	0.02.00
an old cast mettle pot	0.01.06
8 trenchers	0.00.09
an old tin candle box and an old tin tundish	0.01.00
an old spinning wheel	0.02.06
an old pair of blades and a stand	0.00.06
a very small fire grate and cheeks	0.01.00
a little looking glass	0.00.04
an old clock	1.00.00

So that although Margaret Higginson had a list of 32 items in her inventory, even a few 'luxuries' from Weatherill's list (table, pewter, clock and looking glass) the nature of her household is conveyed by the descriptions.

A number of the inventories did not specify individual rooms, for example Higginson, Mugg, Foxall and Devey. In the case of Elizabeth Mugg the kitchen objects were listed first and these were followed with what appear to be the contents of a bedchamber. The order was reversed for Margaret Higginson. This suggests that there was more than one room but that the appraiser ran them together. The inventory of Ann Devey was less clear, beginning with a feather bed and blankets, proceeding to a list of kitchen equipment, returning to several beds and bedding and ending with more kitchen equipment. All three inventories suggest rather reduced households or that these women's goods had been reduced by the time the inventory was taken. This was most marked in the case of Elizabeth Foxall whose list was so brief that it can be quoted in full:

a dresser of drawers & pewter frame	0.10.00
a small cratch	0.01.00
36 old pewter at 7d	1.01.00
an old iron kettle and dripping pan	0.01.00
5 pair old sheets	0.07.06
an old chest and coffer	0.05.00
an old warming pan 2 small tables and 6 chairs	0.09.06
a cooler and barrel	0.03.00
a grate tongs shovel and spit etc	0.06.00
an old small bed bedsteads	0.10.06
a kettle and saucepans	0.01.00

The circumstances of how these women, all widows, lived, is not known. Perhaps their homes were poorly equipped or they had been reduced due to economic necessity before they died or perhaps goods had been distributed before the inventory was made. Some widows and spinsters would no doubt, have lived as lodgers and therefore have had an incomplete household.[76] Two inventories referred to a 'lodger's room' (Chandler and Jeffries). Davidoff and Hall refer to this as:

> One of the greatest hardships of the comparatively poor members of the middle class was to go into lodgings, in other people's houses. As a middle-aged Colchester spinster noted bitterly, living in lodgings meant never being able to impress a personality on surroundings, intrusions of privacy, restrictions on hospitality and sudden notices to quit.[77]

Similarly having a lodger was a compromise many independent women had to make since it was one of the few ways for middling women to have an income.

Despite the general impoverishment of most of these inventories, there were small 'luxuries' in some of these homes, even if they were not of great value. For example Ann Devey's inventory was taken after her death in 1767. Her total household goods amounted to £19.6.2 and all her goods and chattels were granted to Thomas Pass,

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[76]Trinder and Cox found this was often the case. Barrie Trinder and Jeff Cox (eds) (1980), *Yeomen and Colliers in Telford,* Chichester: Phillimore, p. 90.
[77]Davidoff and Hall (1987), p. 358.

Cheesefactor and Benjamin Yates, Grocer, both of Bridgnorth, being her principal creditors. Clearly Ann Devey was in debt and yet her home contained several feather beds, a dresser and drawers and pewter frame with 6 pewter dishes, 4 brass candlesticks, a brass kettle, a tea kettle, 12 chairs, a round table, an oak table and delph plates, a clock and case worth £4.2.0 and even a curtain rod indicating that at some point she had had curtains.

A slightly better standard is indicated by Elizabeth Jefferies's inventory of 1768, although the total only amounted to about £17.0.0. Her home consisted of kitchen, parlour, 'lower lodging room', brewhouse and celler, with two rooms above. Various 'luxuries' were included; pewter, coffee pot, earthenware, tables, and a parlour containing just:

2 corner cupboards	0.10.00
2 tables and ironing board	0.05.00
2 looking glasses and chimney piece	0.04.00
7 old pictures	0.01.00

While her inventory amounted to very little Elizabeth Jefferies also left a will, made in 1761, in which a number of luxury items were bequeathed although these items do not appear in the inventory presumably because they were given as gifts to the appropriate people before she died, or she had sold them. She left 3 brothers silver items, a guinea and her pew in church. A sister-in-law clothes, china and silver spoons, 6 nieces items of clothing, linen, silver and brass items plus five shillings each to 2 nephews. Finally, to John Anderson the bed, bedsteads and 'covering in the Little Room'.

A similar importance is paid to the disposal of her goods by Anne Rowley, spinster who died in 1762. Her home consisted of kitchen, cellar, brewhouse and three rooms over, the total appraised at £19.13.6. Ann Rowley remembered friends in her will

bequeathing a ring to Ann Hilton and Margaret Reynolds, while the rest of her goods and chattels were to go Ann Stone, the daughter of Stephen Stone of Bilton in Staffordshire. Thomas Bass her executor was to keep the goods until Anne was 21 but she was to have the clothes immediately. It is not known what Ann Rowley's relationship was to Ann Stone but as a spinster without children she was helping a young girl get established.[78]

The presence of small luxuries in several of the inventories perhaps indicates a change in circumstances. This was most evident in Anne Chandler's inventory which was taken at her death in 1814. Her household goods were fairly meagre and she shared her home with a lodger. It would appear that the first floor chamber was the lodger's bed room and the second chamber was used by him/her as a sitting room.[79] Downstairs was a kitchen and 'Back Parlour'. While containing little of value, this parlour was filled with objects: display items, sentimental items and practical goods. It included 6 books although she could not write her name.[80] The crowded nature of the room is further suggested by the manner of taking the inventory; all the items were run together rather than in an orderly list.

> Back Parlour
>
> A tent Bedstead and Furniture, A Feather Bed Bolster and Two Pillows, A mattress, Five Blankets, A Counterpane, A Pair of Sheets, One Window Curtain, One Chest of Drawers (no Lock), One Arm Chair and Cushion, One Night Chair and Pan, 2 Common Chairs, One Round Table, A Swing Looking Glass, One Large Looking Glass over Chimney, One Smaller Ditto Side of Bed, Two Family Pictures, One Poker Tong and Shovel, An Iron Hanger, a Pair of Bellow, One Flat Iron, One Iron Candlestick, One Tin Do., Four China Bowls, One Tea Caddy, A Tin Ditto, Three Small Basons and Six Cups and Saucers, A Pint Metal Mug, A Knife Tray, A Walking Stick with Ivory Handle, A Japan Tea Tray, A Large Chest

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[78]Berg has found similar attention to detail in the wills made by women in the later eighteenth century. See Berg (1996).

[79]There were few items in this room presumably because some of the contents belonged to the lodger.

[80]Or she may have been too ill to write her name. However, Weatherill suggests this was not uncommon and that uneducated women sometimes learnt to read but not write. (1986), p. 142.

Containing Clothes and other Articles (locked) A Bible and two Prayer Books. Three other Books.

While Ann Chandler owned numerous items that point to a rich material culture their concentration in one room, called a parlour, but in which she also slept, all indicate a reduced household. Individual items were important for status, display and symbolic value but these items lost much of their display value due to their disposition in the house.

Like many independent women at this period, it is difficult to attribute Higher or Lower middling rank status to Ann Chandler. This is partly due to lack of information about her position and status but also due to women obtaining their status and identity through the men in their lives; fathers and husbands. Anne Chandler's lack of status may only have dated from her years of widowhood and her household might have been very different during her marriage. Unlike the more secure Susanna Marrian, referred to in Chapter 5, with her farm still intact and her sons around her. Nine years after her husband's death the farm house was essentially the same with the slight adjustments noted, that reflected changing habits in food consumption and presentation and perhaps also her own ideas about such matters.

The Poyner sisters in Bridgnorth and Miss Mayor in Meole Brace were the wealthiest women (apart from Ann Boulton) in Table 6:1 and had far more substantial homes than the spinsters or widows already considered. One would expect the organisation of their homes to reflect this. But their homes had omissions that were almost certainly to do with their spinster status and therefore with their social status.

Catherine and Hannah Poyner's inventory was made after their deaths, presumably in quick succession, in 1765. They left their goods to John Langley, the creditor of their late brother. The sisters owned the leases of several properties and the rents provided

them with an income. Their household consisted of a kitchen, hall, parlour and brewhouse, with two bed chambers plus a small room over the hall and garrets above, which were used for storage, as well as a servant's bed chamber. Their goods provide an extensive list. The parlour contained:

a Japan tea board	0.00.06
a table	0.14.00
a fire screen	0.06.00
a large oak table	0.10.00
a small mahogany do	0.14.00
six chairs and a elbow do	0.15.00
a tea chest and cannisters	0.07.00
two mahogany hand boards	0.08.00
a fender	0.01.00

This parlour had some luxuries connected with tea drinking that indicates participation in fashionable consumption. However there were omissions from this parlour which suggests an earlier eighteenth century interior for people of the Poyner's position. The Conversation Piece portrait of c. 1740 (Figure 6:1) demonstrates a similar formality to that of the Poyner's home. Their Hall contained as many items for display as the parlour and the latter lacked any of the more modern touches of carpet, window curtains, sofa, gilt mirrors and pictures.

Both the bed chambers had substantial furniture; bed steads with hangings worth £4.0.0 and £3.3.0, several chest of drawers a piece, dressing tables, chairs and table, but the only wood mentioned was oak. The chamber over the kitchen was presumably the larger of the two since it contained an extra bed, perhaps for the servant who 'attended them in their last illness'. This also meant that the kitchen was larger than the parlour (a common arrangement) and the inventory for the kitchen was extensive, for furniture and for cooking implements. The quantity and variety of cooking wares suggest that this was an important aspect of the women's lives. At this period and for women of their age, it would not have been uncommon for them

to have been involved in the practical aspects of household management as well as supervising their servant/s. Food preparation, both plain and fancy, would have been possible in their kitchen. Their large amount of linen no doubt required a great deal of time and energy to keep in pristine condition. In addition to the practical side of homemaking the Poyners also owned display items connected with food and drink: numerous china items including tea wares, chocolate cups and some fancy sounding blue and gold cups and saucers. In addition the Poyners had small silver items such as spoons and tea tongs, strainer and cream pot. The Poyners were well equipped to entertain a few people to tea in their parlour but nothing more extensive. Their position may have been rather different if they had been male or had married, with a household that reflected a more active social and public role.

The expectation that widows and spinsters would lead a quiet life out of the social and public realm was implied in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* when the widowed Mrs Dashwood and her three daughters were discussed by John Dashwood and his wife, the latter exclaimed:

> Altogether they will have five hundred a-year amongst them, and what on earth can four women want for more than that? They will live so cheap! Their housekeeping will be nothing at all. They will have no carriage, no horses, and hardly any servants; they will keep no company, and can have no expenses of any kind![81]

'No company' clearly indicates that she expected them to lead a quiet life. The link between a widow's lifestyle and material goods was then reinforced when the elder Mrs Dashwood's china was referred to; 'the set of breakfast china is twice as handsome as what belongs to this house. A great deal too handsome, in my opinion, for any place *they* can ever afford to live in.'

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[81]Jane Austen (1994), *Sense and Sensibility* [1811], Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 10-11.

Although the Poyners' home was lacking in its social possibilities for the 1760s the growth of giving dinner parties by the early nineteenth century put spinsters at an increasing disadvantage as the period progressed. This fact would have had an influence on the spinster, Miss Mayor of Meole Brace, a village on the outskirts of Shrewsbury. Miss Mayor's household goods were advertised in the *Salopian Journal* to be sold by auction in 1831. Her goods were described as: 'Genteel and nearly new Household Furniture, capital Bed and Table Linen; China, Glass and Effects.' Perhaps the lack of closer reference to items of furniture in the heading of the advertisement indicated something about the quantity or quality of the goods. But the listed items included substantial pieces in mahogany such as a tent bedstead, a wash-hand stand, a chest of drawers, a:

> handsome solid Spanish mahogany Bureau and Bookcase, Spanish Mahogany Stand Table, 4 Mahogany Chairs (hair seats), 4 neat imitation Rosewood Chairs (cane seats), excellent Spanish mahogany Pembroke Table on Pillar and Claw, neat Couch stuffed with Hair and Hair Squab and Bolsters, Mahogany Lady's Work Tables, Portable Writing Desk, handsome small Spanish Mahogany Bookcase (glazed doors).

While this list contained good quality items there were some omissions. Although the newspaper advertisement would not have listed the entire household auctioneers always listed the best goods that a house had to offer. The lack of certain pieces of furniture indicate a reduced household. Some of the larger items listed were described as oak or a material is not given. Some items were described as painted and while these items might have been fashionable, like the fancy chairs in imitation rosewood, may have been of inferior construction. A total of 8 chairs were listed, just 4 mahogany and 4 imitation rosewood. While advice books recommended mahogany for dining rooms and rosewood for drawing rooms in this case they may have been in one general parlour. While the number of chairs was sadly deficient, the main omission was any table described as, or that might conceivably double as, a

dining table; neither the stand table nor the pembroke table were adequate for entertaining. Therefore the picture emerges of a comfortable home with many fashionable and good quality items but one which probably did not have a separate dining room and did not have an adequate table for a dinner party. Likewise also lacking was a celleret/sarcophogas for wine and a sideboard, both essential items for a dining room to function for a smart dinner party. Weatherill also indicated fewer tables in the homes of independent women compared with the homes with a male head and this pattern may have continued long after the early eighteenth century.[82]

Above a certain level of income these 'problems' for spinsters seem to be less in evidence. This is demonstrated by Ann Boulton's dining room furniture at just the same date as Miss Mayor.[83] The 'Dining Room' contained 12 mahogany chairs, a set of Spanish mahogany dining tables, plate warmer, barometer and thermometer, rosewood tea chest, Spanish mahogany sideboard, a mahogany sarcophagus, firescreen and rosewood chiffonniere. This was good quality furniture in appropriate materials and all the requisite items for a dining room of the period.

Unlike Miss Fox Ann Boulton was able to entertain on a grand scale and was certainly able to entertain people at a formal dinner party; she had a room designated as a dining room with appropriate furniture and a long list of china and glassware in the Butler's Pantry and therefore with convenient access for servants. While only considering two independent women (Miss Fox and Ann Boulton) here, in the early nineteenth century, the material does suggest a pattern of consumption that is in line with research on independent women in Chichester at a similar period.[84] Of the eight

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[82]Lorna Weatherill (1986), p. 142.
[83]Sale catalogue for Ann Boulton's house, BRL, MBP 286/23.
[84]Margaret Ponsonby unpublished dissertation, 'Provincial Homemaking 1825-1850 (1993), V&A/RCA MA Course in Design History and conference paper, 'Independent Women and Homemaking', given at Exeter University, Gender and Material Culture conference, July 1994. This research used inventories all made by the same person and therefore providing consistent information not present in the two isolated inventories of Miss Fox and Ann Boulton.

Chichester women only two had a dining room, the other six had a room, with various names, that appeared to double as a parlour and dining room. These combination rooms had some of the necessary dining room objects but lacked others and most had extraneous objects that suggested mixed use. In addition the six women without a dining room, although owning quantities of objects, such as tea and dessert china, for entertaining, rather than simply everyday use, the storage of these objects suggested less formal and/or less frequent use. This was due to the objects being stored within the living room, in a built-in cupboard or in a sideboard or chiffonier rather than in a china pantry near the kitchen, as was the case with the two women who did have a dining room. The numbers of servants in these eight households revealed that only the two homes with a dining room had several servants and with specialised functions such as housekeeper and housemaid rather than simply 'female servant', which would have provided the necessary skills for formal entertaining. The two households with dining rooms were headed by women who had extended families living nearby and this appeared to have influenced their position in society and therefore their capacity to use their homes for formal entertaining.

The parallels between the Chichester women and Miss Fox and Ann Boulton suggests that the latter was in a much better social position due to her brother and his family living nearby and therefore her home was used in a formal and public way whereas Miss Fox's home had more limited functions. This kind of use was also described by Elizabeth Gaskell in her novel *Cranford,* first published in 1851 and set in the 1820s, where the independent ladies entertained a great deal but only amongst themselves and only tea and supper parties, never a dinner party. The episode when Miss Matty had to give a dinner for her brother, who had returned from India, threw

her into confusion particularly because her young servant was not trained for a formal dinner party.[85]

Differences according to gender were probably more apparent in the homes of bachelors rather than widowers; widowers would have been able to maintain their home after their spouse had died since in all probability the income would have remained the same. This was the opposite for widows; income was a key point in their homemaking.

The inventory of James Wakeman Newport, was made in 1785, forty years before his death at a good age.[86] This bachelor's home at Hanley William was extensive, with 14 bed chambers and quantities of mahogany furniture, but it lacked fashionable luxuries. The three living rooms all lacked window curtains and carpets and apart from 'four pieces of ornamental china' in the Drawing Room there was a sad lack of decorative items. Although there were many reasons for items to be omitted from an inventory, the old fashioned image seems to be confirmed by the contents of 'Room No. 15' which appears to have been a pantry. There were listed here useful china wares but no plates were included, apart from 'six small desert plates'. Further down the list for this room however, there was the answer, with 'thirteen pewter dishes, one dozen hard pewter plates, twenty three old plates, five hard soup ditto'. While many inventories at this period, even for wealthy homes, listed pewter wares in the kitchen, it would be usual for the list of china to have included plates for the family to use, even on informal occasions. For someone of James Wakeman Newport's status to continue to use pewter plates suggests a determinedly old fashioned lifestyle. The goods that this household lacked; textile furnishings and ceramics were also the goods traditionally associated with 'female' consumption. These omissions may have

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[85]Elizabeth Gaskell (1976), *Cranford* [1851], Harmondswoth: Penguin, p. 67.
[86]BRL, MSS 394886.

been encouraged by his unmarried condition and a rather 'masculine' lifestyle for many years in the Worcestershire militia regiment.

A later example of a bachelor's home being at odds with the 'ideal' is that of James Mullock, a farmer and butcher whose home was inventoried on his death in 1804.[87] While a rural dwelling of this kind might be expected to be behind fashion in its furnishing schemes there were aspects to this household that were exceptional and point to an individual lifestyle, that did not compromise to fit the 'ideal'. The first indication of this was in the first room listed, the 'Houseplace', which is a traditional name for the kitchen combined with living room and James Mullock's houseplace seems to have been used in this way. Cooking items and an oak dresser with pewter were supplemented by several oak tables, two oak screens, an oak elbow chair, 8 turned chairs and 4 more 'odd' chairs. This would not have been unusual for a farmhouse at this period however Mr Mullock's interests in literary matters make an appearance with; '43 books, lot of old unbound books and papers' and this does seem unusual for a houseplace.

The two other living rooms were a Dining Room and Parlour. There was little furniture in the Dining Room, just an oak table and old cupboard plus '2 wood bottles...11 glass bottles, 1 stone do., a Jug with Mr Mullocks name on mounted with silver'. In such a sparsely furnished room the items connected with drinking seem pronounced. In the Parlour there were rather more items and some emphasis on display:

a one flap mahogany dining table
6 Rush bottom chairs
2 Smoaking Chairs
Corner cupboard
Barometer and Thermometer

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[87]SRO, 6000/12165.

a Barometer
11 Plaister figures
7 Prints
Grate with brassnobs

The lack of textile items and comfortable seating is noticeable and the smoking chairs and several barometers suggest 'masculine' aspects. It would have been interesting to know whether the ceramic figures and the prints depicted sporting and political subjects. Further evidence of the character of this house was revealed in the contents of the first floor rooms. In the lobby between the bedrooms was a 'Butchers Pad' along with some lead weights and in 'Mr Mullock's Bedroom'[88] as well as the usual bedroom furniture were:

39 No.s of the Life of Lord Clive
2 Smoaking Chairs
1 Oak Do.
4 Prints.

Therefore Mr Mullock's house was lacking in the 'female' items and had an emphasis on 'masculine' things, along with butchering items stored in an unsuitable place. Finally the large number of books including the 39 copies of the Life of Clive, suggest involvement in political activities and these interests were prominent throughout his house rather than tidily disposed of in a study.

The homes of bachelors depicted in novels give some insight into how such homes were viewed and suggest that homes that declared too strongly bachelor traits were becoming less acceptable by the end of the period. For example Mrs Gaskell's novel *Cranford,* published in parts beginning in 1851 although the novel was set somewhat earlier, in the 1820s, described in some detail a bachelor's home. Miss Matty's old

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[88]The bedroom gave access to a 'Further Room' in which Mr Mullock stored some valuables; silver tankards, teaspoons and money.

suitor, Mr Holbrook, was shown living in an old fashioned house. Miss Matty and Mary Smith were shown into a room of uncertain character with:

> oak dressers and cupboards all round, all over by the fireplace, and only a small Turkey carpet in the middle of the flag floor. The room might have been easily made into a handsome dark-oak dining-parlour, by removing the oven, and a few other appurtenances of a kitchen, which was evidently never used.[89]

The ladies reject this 'ugly apartment' and chose instead to sit in Mr Holbrook's counting-house which looked out over the orchard and was filled with books which 'lay on the ground, they covered the walls, they strewed the table.'[90] The lack of anything resembling a parlour, the old fashioned furnishings and the disorder were intended to convey the lack of female influence but also his honest and robust masculinity. The reader was not meant to judge Mr Holbrook too harshly since the shortcomings of his home were due to his never having married, after Miss Matty's family had prevented their marriage taking place.

A different view of bachelors and their homemaking emerges from Trollope's novel *Can You Forgive Her?*, first published in 1864. The story revolved around Alice Vavasor and whether she would be foolish and marry her cousin George or realise the merits of Mr Grey. Alice's mother died when she was young and her father did little to make a home for her, preferring to spend his time at his club.

> Alice Vavasor's drawing-room was not pretty. Her father had had the care of furnishing the house and he had entrusted the duty to a tradesman who had chosen green paper, a green carpet, green curtains and green damask chairs. There was a green damask sofa, and two green armchairs opposite each other at the two sides of the fire place.[91]

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[89]Gaskell (1976), p. 73.
[90]Gaskell (1976), p. 74.
[91]Anthony Trollope (1982), *Can You Forgive Her?* [1864], Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 9.

Mr Vavasor's lack of interest in his home was used to show that he was an uncaring parent. George Vavasor, we are told lived in lodgings, just a few rooms, when he was in London; he also had a 'place' in Oxforshire for when he went hunting and 'a third, too, very closely hidden from the world's eye, which shall be nameless'. This last we are left to assume was where his mistress lived. The sitting-room in his lodgings was 'neat':

> The inkstand, the paper-weight, the envelope case on his writing-table were all handsome. He had a single good portrait of a woman's head hanging on one of his walls. He had a special place adapted for his pistols, others for his foils, and again another for his whips. The room was as pretty a bachelor's room as you would wish to enter, but you might see, by the position of the single easy-chair that was brought forward, that it was seldom appropriated to the comfort of more than one person.[92]

While Trollope concedes that the room was pretty for a bachelor's room he manages to convey that there was something suspect in the attention to George Vavasor's interests and comforts, and only his. The third home described was that belonging to Mr Grey, who had a house in Cambridgeshire:

> The house itself was as excellent a residence for a country gentleman of small means as taste and skill together could construct. I doubt whether prettier rooms were ever seen than the drawing-room, the library, and the dining room at Nethercoats. They were all on the ground-floor, and all opened out to the garden and lawn....the garden at Nethercoats constituted its greatest glory.[93]

In this way Trollope distinguished between the characters of the novel and used the lack of male interest in the home to suggest, at best indifference, and at worst immorality. While Mr Grey's interest in creating a lovely home signals to the reader that he was the true hero of the story, even if his actions had been rather tame compared to those of the dashing George.

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[92]Trollope (1982), p. 122.
[93]Trollope (1982). p. 101.

The examples of late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century homes of bachelors show them to have strong masculine characters and the fictional example of Mr Holbrook's house reveals that this was not necessarily viewed unfavourably. The examples from Trollope suggest that attitudes were changing by the mid century.

Conclusion

The notion of the 'ideal' home, as presented in contemporary advice books and the stereotype derived from them in secondary literature, have been explored in this chapter. Within advice books it was noted that practical advice was lacking in the most moralistic of this literature, suggesting that it was received in a different way by its readers. Branca has warned that even the books which appear to be the most practical were based on standards that the majority of housewives would have found impossible to achieve. Vickery and Beetham have both suggested that such literature offered a more complex message than has been recognised and that the message was mediated by its readers. The definite linking between certain 'ideals' in homemaking and the period due to the rise of Evangelical ideas and a homogenised middle class were also questioned; the continuity of the advice suggesting a slower and more gradual evolution of attitudes and the variety of homes emerging in Chapters 4 and 5 indicate that middling sort homes did not conform to a homogenous material culture.

The examples of West Midlands homes dealt with in this chapter have shown homes with a variety of physical characteristics which meant that, in their different ways, they did not fit the 'ideal' presented in the advice books. Reality was more diverse and complex than the standardised and stereotypical image. The circumstances of the lived experience varied from one individual to another but it is suggested here that all homemakers were exposed to less than 'ideal' situations at some point in their

lives. Such experiences were the result of remaining unmarried, the loss of a spouse or financial difficulties. Diverse homemaking attitudes and strategies resulted which included selling belongings in public house sales or the purchase of second-hand goods. Households were also organised in a variety of ways since different lifestyles dictated particular social roles for the home. Since so many households did not comprise the stereotypical inhabitants or perform the stereotypical social role we need to accept that the ideal was not typical, whether desired or not.

Chapter 7

Gendered Homemaking: The Role of Women in the Feminisation of Interiors

The main concern of this chapter is to examine the nature of the home environment and to consider to what extent women affected its creation. What is incontrovertible is that the home environment changed between 1760 and 1860, not just stylistically, but in the fundamental nature of the furnishings; such changes are often referred to as a 'feminisation' of interiors.[1] (See Figures 1:1-4) This term is used due to the increase in textile items in the home and more particularly to the use of textiles in 'softening' the architectural features of rooms. What is not clear are the reasons for the changes, linked as they are to changes in the nature of home life and how the home was used. To consider the role of gender in shaping the nature of interior decoration and furnishing is prompted by a large body of writing on domestic ideology and the notion of separate spheres. During the 1970s and 1980s many feminist historians[2] have interpreted the early nineteenth century attitudes to the home, as expressed in contemporary literature, as an increase in the suppression of women in the nineteenth century. The main argument generally revolves around the notion of separate spheres; that women were confined to the 'private' realm of home while men were free to inhabit the public sphere of work. This argument has had a wide impact, many texts refer to it as fact and it is only in recently published work that this notion of the separate spheres has begun to be

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[1]C.J. Berry (1994), *The Idea of Luxury: a Conceptual and Historical Investigation, London: Cambridge University Press*, p 14. Berry claims this is a familiar interpretation and cites W. Rybczynski (1988), *Home: a Short History of an Idea,* London: Heinemann and P. Thornton (1984), *Authentic Decor 1620-1920,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

[2]For example M. Vicinus (ed.) (1973), *Suffer and Be Still*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; M. Hartmann and L. Banner (eds) (1974), *Clio's Consciousness Raised,* New York: Harper; S. Delamont and L. Duffin (eds) (1978), *The Nineteenth Century Woman*, London: Croom Helm; D. Gorhan (1982), *The Victorian girl and the feminine ideal*, London: Croom Helm.

challenged. This chapter must therefore begin by explaining the theory of separate spheres and its interpretation of contemporary domestic literature.[3] This theory can then be challenged using recent publications to establish a new framework for understanding gendered aspects of homemaking. With this new framework in place the evidence of gender in homemaking practice in the West Midlands and the role of women in feminising the home can be examined.

Domestic Ideology and the Notion of Separate Spheres

The collection of essays, edited by Martha Vicinus, *Suffer and Be Still*,[4] characterises the 1970s feminist approach to the injustices of the Victorian woman's position in society. The essays are written as a justification of women's history, and need to be seen in that light.[5] However the collection now reads as a somewhat stereotyped version of women's history; the narrowly confined woman of the first half of the nineteenth century who becomes the emancipation demanding woman of the later nineteenth century. Vicinus refers to the former as the 'perfect lady', who 'was seen as exerting an all-pervasive moral influence within the home.'[6] This book uses novels, paintings and contemporary prescriptive literature extensively as evidence.

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[3]Contemporary domestic literature was examined in Chapter 6. Examples included Mrs William Parkes (1828), *Domestic Duties or Instructions to Young Married Ladies,* New York: Harper; Mrs Ellis (1844), *Family Monitor and Domestic Guide: The Women of England their Social Duties and Domestic Habits*, New York: Henry G. Lanley; Alexis Soyer (1849), *The Modern Housewife or Ménagère,* London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co.

[4]The title is quoted from Mrs Ellis (1845), *Daughters of England,* Vicinus (1973), p. x.

[5]Vicinus, (1973), p. x.

[6]Vicinus, (1973), p. xiv.

A second example of 1970s feminist writing on nineteenth century women is *Fit work for women,* edited by Sandra Burman.[7] One of this collection of essays is by Catherine Hall and crystallises the development of the idea of 'separate spheres'.[8] Hall claims that the classic industrialisation period, 1780 to 1830, was crucial, due partly to the development of a middle class and partly because of the rise of Evangelical religious ideas. Both led to a 'redefinition of the position of the woman in the family'.[9] She claims that the middle class woman retreated from work and 'Home became the sphere of women and the family; the world outside became the sphere of men.'[10] Hall's argument stresses not only that a change had taken place but also the timing, the reasons for, and the absolute nature of this change.

Perhaps the most prominent exposition of the notion of 'separate spheres' is *Family Fortunes* by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall.[11] While this is an important work of social history, drawing on an impressive range of research material, its emphasis on separate spheres is a limitation. In the Prologue and at various points in the book Davidoff and Hall point out the problems of imposing a strict separation of gendered spheres of influence[12] and yet the over-riding message of the book is that the contemporary prescriptive literature can be read literally, that women inhabited a 'privatized home, separated from the world'.[13] *Family Fortunes* stresses a similar time

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[7]Sandra Burman (ed.) (1979), *Fit Work for Women,* London: Croom Helm. This collection is also part of the campaign for greater recognition for women's history being part of a series of books that arose from seminars for Oxford University's Women's Studies Committee.
[8]Catherine Hall (1979),'The early formation of Victorian domestic ideology' in Burman (1979).
[9]Hall (1979), p. 21.
[10]Hall (1979), p. 24.
[11]Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall (1987), *Family Fortunes: men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850,* London: Routledge.
[12]For example the comment 'Public was not really public and private not really private despite the potent imagery of 'separate spheres'.' Davidoff and Hall (1987), p. 33.
[13]Davidoff and Hall (1987), p. 115.

span to the Hall essay referred to, and sees the period 1780 to 1850 as crucial. due to the evolution of a distinct middle class and the influence of Evangelical ideas.

Challenging the Notion of Separate Spheres

The notion of separate spheres has become so pervasive that virtually any writing on the nineteenth century home takes it as an incontrovertible truth, thus limiting fresh interpretation of the evidence. The linking of this notion to a particular time span and to a unified middle class consciousness immediately puts it at odds with the arguments of the present research project; that evolution rather than sudden changes marked homemaking practice and that variety and difference, rather than homogeneity, within what is usually described as the middle class, makes the use of a class specific term undesirable. In order that an unbiased reading of the gendered aspects of West Midland homes during the period can be accomplished it is first necessary to challenge the notion of 'separate spheres'.

The leading critic of separate spheres is Amanda Vickery who has in recent years built up a body of writing that undermines this notion. Vickery warns against reading contemporary literature too literally. The continual insistence on women playing an idealised role in the domestic sphere was as much about male fears of women becoming active in public life and the increased possibilities for women's involvement in public life; from debating societies to charitable organisations.[14]

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[14]Amanda Vickery (1993), 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal,* volume 36, number 2, pp. 383-414, p. 10.

Vickery makes a number of points, firstly, that various writers have claimed that separate spheres emerged at different times in history (and too the emergence of the middle class happened in a number of centuries) and therefore the historical specificity of the argument is suspect.[15] Her second criticism is that the proponents of separate spheres claim a break in women's commercial and trade activity, after which they are relegated to domestic activity within the home, whereas as Vickery points out there is ample evidence that as early as the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries 'urban women already clustered in the so-called feminine trades: petty retail, food and drink, and textiles.'[16] And this was also the case in 1851 according to the census statistics. Women had always been more concerned with the household and children than men and their occupations have also tended to reflect this expertise. Her third point is that people made less distinction between public and private in the way they conducted their lives; the home was also a place for public activities in which women played a key role.[17] Tim Meldrum also makes this point; that while architectural articulation of space might point towards greater privacy in the later eighteenth century house, the lived experience was far more complex and confused.[18] In a similar vein the editors of *Domestic Space* refer to the home's 'liminal status' in the nineteenth century.[19]

Further comments on the notion of separate spheres comes from Shoemaker and Wahrman. Shoemaker has emphasised the continuity of advise to women from the mid

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[15]Vickery (1993), p. 3.
[16]Vickery (1993), p.4.
[17]Vickery (1993), p.9.
[18]Tim Meldrum (1999), 'Domestic service, privacy and the eighteenth-century metropolitan household', *Urban History,* volume 26, number 1, pp. 27-39.
[19]I. Bryden and J. Floyd (eds) (1999), *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 1.

seventeenth century to the mid nineteenth.[20] While accepting that notions of femininity did change during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century he claims that:

> What differentiates prescriptions for male and female social roles is not so much that they were told to inhabit separate spheres of action defined spatially (although men were expected to have a wider range of personal contacts), but that they had separate duties and were expected to behave differently: both at home and in public.[21]

Wahrman's argument is that the Reform Bill of 1832 brought about not only a political change for the middling sort but also social and cultural changes which came to be represented in a stronger middle class identity. Before 1832 middleclassness was characterised by public and political causes which were seen as predominantly masculine.[22] It was after 1832, Wahrman claims, that middleclassness 'engulfed' both public and private, and gender distinctions were no longer of primary importance.[23] Wahrman's argument is useful for challenging the long held view that the emergence of the middle class during the time period 1780 to 1830 was intrinsically linked to the development of 'middle class values' and in particular a domestic ideology.

Vickery and Shoemaker's criticisms of the use of domestic ideology and separate spheres to explain homemaking, and Wahrman's claim that nineteenth century domestic ideology was not intrinsically linked to the emergence of the middle class but was a later development, prompt a new reading of the evidence of the role of women as homemakers during the period. Vickery has also stressed that the eighteenth century women that she studied played a more active role than is sometimes acknowledged; that

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[20]Robert B. Shoemaker (1998), *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: the Emergence of Separate Spheres?*, London and New York: Longman, p. 32.
[21]Shoemaker (1998), p.31.
[22]Dror Wahrman (1995), *Imagining the Middle Class: the Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840,* London: Cambridge University Press, p. 381.
[23]Wahrman (1995), p. 395.

'the administration of the household, the management of servants, the guardianship of material culture and the organisation of family consumption fell to their lot.'[24] It is the continuation of these managerial roles and women's influence over the symbolic aspects of the home as 'guardians' of its material culture that most concerns us in this chapter.

A basis for new interpretations of women's role as homemakers

While Vickery, Wahrman and Shoemaker's work provides a starting point for re-examining the role of gender in homemaking practice it still remains to find a framework that is an alternative to separate spheres for analysing the evidence. The work of Katherine Grier provides such a framework. Grier's overarching approach is to analyse the symbolic nature of homemaking practice and the objects within the home; symbolic meanings that allowed a number of different and even conflicting messages to be expressed, this Grier reduces to two strands, which are expressed in the title of her book, *Culture and Comfort*.[25] In her introduction Grier defines these terms and the tension between them:

> The terms 'culture' and 'comfort' concisely designate two complex collations of ideas, attitudes, and assumptions that represent a critical tension in Victorian culture. 'Culture' is used here as shorthand for the cultivated world view of educated, genteel, and cosmopolitan people whose habits of consumption (including furnishing a gala parlor) were intended to create an expressive social demeanor. On the other hand, 'comfort' signals a group of ideas and beliefs not simply associated with a pleasurable physical state. It also designates the presence of the more family-centred, even religious values associated with 'home', values emphasizing perfect sincerity and moderation in all things.[26]

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[24]Amanda Vickery (1998), *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 8.
[25]Katherine C. Grier (1988), *Culture and Comfort: people, parlors and upholstery 1850-1930,* Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press. It needs to be noted that Grier is writing about an American set of circumstances where the term parlor was used to signify rooms that in England would have been variously described as drawing rooms or parlours depending on status.
[26]Grier (1988), p. 1.

These two strands can also be read as public AND private and it is this conflict in meanings that undermines the simple and oppositional categories of home/work, private/public, female/male.

Using the idea of a tension between culture and comfort Grier examines the development of parlours; a best living room for family use and for entertaining but with a use that was distinct from the rest of the home. This was due to the parlour being the site for social rituals.[27] Grier claims that this room needed to be as formal as possible and to contain the best that the household could afford in order that the events that took place there were given their due respect.[28] By having a room primarily for show meant that there were greater possibilities for decoration since the room could be less practical than other rooms of the house. The symbolic qualities attributed to the concepts of culture and comfort had a dual role in achieving the message that the parlour needed to convey.[29]

Grier is concerned with the period leading on from the one dealt with here. However she allows the Victorian home to be seen as a continuation, rather than a radical divergence from earlier homemaking. Therefore despite the changes within the physical environment of the home during the period 1760 to 1860 they can be seen as an increase in certain established trends; that the home was used as a site of symbolic and ritualistic use, as well as providing the obvious physical requirements. The remainder of this chapter will first examine a selection of homes, across the period, looking for the strands of 'culture' and 'comfort' to provide an alternative reading of homemaking from the notion of separate spheres. This will provide the basis for, secondly, considering the role

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[27]Grier (1988), p. 64.
[28]Grier (1988), p.66.
[29]Grier (1988), p.75.

of women as the managers of the home and as the guardians of material culture. These two sections will thus constitute an analysis of the influence of gender on homemaking decisions.

Culture and Comfort in Homemaking Practice

For this section nine inventories have been selected that span most of the period, making use of inventories that appear to be particularly full accounts of home contents. While most people fell into the category of Higher rank middling sort the concern here is with the symbolic possibilities of objects rather than their monetary value, although some consideration will be given to differences/similarities between homes and people's social position. Only living rooms are to be looked at in detail although information from other rooms will be included as necessary.

Table 7:1 The households for observing culture and comfort in homemaking practice.

Name	Date	Social status	Marital status	Household members
Susanna Marrian	1770	Lower rank	Widow	Family
James Eyken	1780	Lower rank	Married	Family?
Joseph Priestley	1791	Higher rank	Married	Family
John Staunton	1811	Gentry	Married	One son
Ann Fox	1813	Higher rank	Spinster	No family
Richard Pratchett	1824	Higher rank	Not known	Family?
Ann Boulton	1832	Higher rank	Spinster	No family
Jonah Bissell	1842	Lower rank	Bachelor	No family
Francis Harries	1848	Gentry	Married	Family

Susanna Marrian (1770) [30]

[30]Probate inventory, LJRO.

Susanna Marrian was the widow of a farmer and continued, with the aid of her adult sons to run the farm. The farmhouse seems to have had one living room - the 'Parlour' although there was also the 'Hall' which had a room above large enough to be a bedroom.

Culture

Display possibilities existed in both the parlour and hall; the former contained a corner cupboard with glasses, still comparatively rare at this period. A mahogany tea chest with silver tongs shows that the ritual of the tea table could be employed using prestigious equipment and a 'large map' in the parlour and 'a looking glass and picture' in the hall provided decorative display items.

Comfort

None of the chairs listed appear to have been upholstered or had cushions or even cane/rush seats. Neither the parlour or hall had any textiles listed.

Summary and interpretation

Display items were present in the living rooms but no textiles although textiles were listed in the inventory for the main bed chambers (two out of three had hangings for the bed and window curtains) there was also a long list of linen, including tablecloths. This household therefore fitted the eighteenth century style of using textiles; when middling homes were increasingly employing them but in a limited manner. Schoelwer's work on Philadelphia inventories[31] produces similar findings. Schoelwer claims that in the eighteenth century textiles had physical, psychological and social functions, but with:

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[31]Susan Prendergast Schoelwer (1979), 'Form, Function and Meaning in the Use of Fabric Furnishings: a Philadelphia case study 1700-1775', *Winterthur Portfolio*, volume 14, number 1, pp. 25-40.

psychological and social needs overshadowing physical needs. Upholstery enhanced bodily comfort far more than did table coverings, yet the latter developed earlier and attained widespread distribution long before the former. Since fabric furnishings were psychologically ennobling and elevating, they were applied first to surfaces serving the most important activities of human life and later to those surfaces of lesser significance.[32]

The order for the acquisition of textiles was for bed coverings (beds playing 'a central role in man's life'[33]) then bed hangings, followed by tables, seating and finally the 'architectural parameters of his shelter';[34] window curtains and floor coverings. Although Schoelwer is dealing with the American colonies, which may have been slightly behind England at this period, Susanna Marrian's rural position places her on a similar level, to those examined by Schoelwer, which did not show extensive use of textiles.[35] The only use of textiles in the Parlour would have been a 'huckaback table cloth' or one of the '5 fine table cloths', which the inventory listed. This parlour seems to be not greatly changed from the one depicted in Joseph van Aken's *Grace before a meal.* (See Figure 1:1) This painting is dated c.1730 but as Styles has pointed out, interiors of the late eighteenth century could be almost as bare as those of the early years of the century despite acquiring more objects.[36] While some of the details might have changed; the glasses and mahogany tea chest replacing the coarse earthenware and pewter the character and symbolic meanings appear to have been similar.

James Eyken (1780)[37]

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[32]Schoelwer (1979), p. 27.
[33]Schoelwer (1979), p. 27.
[34]Schoelwer (1979), p. 29.
[35]Schoelwer noted more use of textiles in urban households than rural and more in the homes of merchants, followed by tradesmen with craftmen and finally yeomen trailing somewhat behind. p. 34-5.
[36]John Styles (1993), 'Manufacturing, Consumption and Design in Eighteenth-Century England', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods,* London: Routledge, p. 539.
[37]PRO, PROB 31/678/155, XC4409CL, inventory.

James Eyken was a cabinet maker and upholsterer and his home in Wolverhampton was attached to his workshops, it had two living rooms, the 'Little Parlour' and the 'Large Parlour'.

Culture

Both living rooms provided ample opportunities for display. Both had a large number of pictures (19 in the small parlour and 16 in the large, all were 'glased' so presumably they had frames). Both rooms had Dutch tiles in the fireplace and a chimney board. The Large Parlour also had a fire screen. While the smaller room had 'a looking glass' the larger had 'an oval pier glass in carved frame', it also had '11 Ornaments on Chimney'. Both rooms had mahogany tables. Both rooms had paper hangings, still rare in middling homes at this date.[38] The plate and china were listed in the inventory separately but these would also have played a part in the display uses of these rooms.

Comfort

The differences between the rooms were marked; the Little Parlour having only hair seats for the chairs and 'a small floorcloth'. While the Large Parlour had far more; 'a Couch with a Loose Check Cover and Bolster, a Festoon window Curtain and 1 for Door'. More comfortable seating was included with '1 Easy Chair and Cushion' a 'Camp Stool and Cushion' as well as five chairs with hair stuffed seats. Carpeting was provided with 'A floor cloth and 1 Small piece Do'.

Summary and interpretation

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[38]It was unusual for wall paper to be listed in inventories, possibly they were attached to canvas stretched on battens and therefore removeable. Peter Thornton (1984), *Authentic Decor: the Domestic Interior 1620-1920,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, p. 99.

This house contained numerous items with the potential for display. The ornaments on the mantel, presumably china, suggest an 'architectural use of ceramics'[39] which was usual for this period but the excessive number seems a little ostentatious, perhaps recalling Hogarth's depiction of such a mantel in the second painting in the series *Marriage a la Mode*. (Figure 7:1) By far the most textiles and comfortable seating used was in the largest and most prestigious room and therefore the one most likely to be seen by visitors to the house. The advanced nature of both display and comfort may have been due to Eyken being in the cabinet making and upholstering trade. Perhaps also his home was used as part of his business, as noted in Chapter 5 in connection with Boulton visiting the home of his London cabinet maker, James Newton. Although Eyken employed textiles a good deal in his home their use seems to suggests display as the predominant concern.

Joseph Priestley (1791)[40]

Joseph Priestley had two living rooms; a rather basic Front Parlour and a grander Large Back Parlour which seems to have combined drawing room and dining room, there was also a Library for serious academic work.

Culture

Display aspects seem very much in evidence in all three rooms; china ornaments and looking glasses in gilded frames in both parlours and a number of framed drawings although when the subject was recorded it was always of a serious nature. This was also

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[39]In the 18th century ceramics were used to ephasise the architectural features of a room, such as the mantel piece and over doors. Anna Somers Cocks (1989), 'The nonfunctional use of ceramics in the English country house during the eighteenth century', in Gervase Jackson-Stops (ed.), *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House,* WAshington: National Gallery, Washington and University Press of New England, p. 195.

[40]BRL, (IIR30) 399801, inventory.

true of the remaining ornaments in the parlours and the Library. For example the Large Back Parlour had 'Mezzotinto Head of Mr Lee', 'a medallion in a black frame of Dr Priestley, ditto of Mr Wilkinson'. While the Library had several medallions of Sir Isaac Newton, four of Dr Franklin, several drawings/prints of Dr Franklin and religious buildings connected with Priestley. All rooms contained numerous items in mahogany.

Comfort

The use of textiles was less pronounced than the use of ornaments; the Front Parlour had chairs with hair seats and cotton window curtains. The Large Back Parlour had a sofa with a cover to match the cotton window curtains and there was a painted oil cloth on the floor. The Library had only leather seats on some chairs.

Summary and interpretation

There seems to be a strong link between the household arrangements and Priestley's political and religious ideas. While not adverse to using display, everywhere in his home Priestley distributed items which demonstrated his interests and opinions. The Library was the most pronounced in this respect, and no doubt Priestley used his personal library as a place to meet his friends with similar interests. But even the most 'public' room, the Large Parlour, followed the same theme, perhaps indeed because it was the most public room, it needed to proclaim his position.

John Staunton (1811)[41]

John Staunton was a member of the gentry, he lived in Kenilworth with his second wife. Anne and a grown-up son who was a minister. The house had 4 rooms that might have been used as living rooms; a Study which seems to have been a serious library, a Dining

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[41]BRL, 397968, inventory.

Parlour, a Drawing Room which was the grandest living room and a Stone Parlour which had a rather mixed character and use.

Culture

The Study had '2 chimney ornaments' but otherwise the display items were connected with its use as a library; a map, inkstand, 2 busts, telescope, unspecified prints and paintings, plus 2 swords. The Dining Parlour had a 'Large handsome Pier glass in gold burnished frame', brass candlesticks and sconces to provide display. A bookcase, inkstand and barometer suggest uses beyond dining or perhaps were extensions of the idea of having a somewhat masculine theme to dining rooms. The Drawing Room had more ornamentation with 'handsome' chimney ornaments, 2 cut glass chandeliers, paintings and a flower stand. All the furniture in these three rooms was mahogany. The Stone Parlour was somewhat less decorative, although most of the furniture was mahogany, there were also walnut chairs with rush seats and a large oak cupboard, the only purely decorative items were a pier glass with mahogany frame and paintings.

Comfort

The rooms followed the same pattern as above; subdued Study (chairs with hair seats, a carpet and moreen curtains), moderate Dining Parlour (chairs with hair seats, Venetian carpets and a Turkey carpet and only dimity curtains). The Drawing Room had by far the most pronounced use of textiles, with two sofas and some painted chairs upholstered in chintz and window curtains to match. The Stone Parlour had only an 'Old Turkey carpet' and since the 'Stone' might refer to a stone floor (it might also refer to stone colour paint), this room may have lacked comfort.

Summary and interpretation

The Stauntons were a wealthy family with a long pedigree, both of these facts were demonstrated in their home. Although containing much that was of good quality the house adhered to a formal organisation and did not show signs of 'softening' which might be expected by this date. Compare these rooms with Repton's 1816 illustrations of the formal and less formal arrangements of living rooms. (See Figure 1:2 and Figure 7:2) The least formal room in this house was the Stone Parlour, which appears to have been for male use rather than for the whole family.[42]

Ann Fox (1813)[43]

Ann Fox was a spinster and philanthropist, who lived in her own house in Kinver, which had two living rooms; a Breakfast Parlour and Dining Parlour. There was little by way of culture or comfort in either room and there appears to have been little difference between them, the Dining Parlour was slightly better furnished. By this date the terms drawing room and dining room were being used to describe the living rooms in middling sort homes. It is not clear whether the choice of terms was Miss Fox's own or the auctioneer's. Were these living rooms designated in this way due to the style of furnishing and/or the way the rooms were organised for use?[44]

Culture

Decoration was provided by a pier glass in the dining room, and both rooms contained a mixture of mahogany and oak furniture. Perhaps the most important difference was the use of ceramics; Miss Fox distributed the ceramics about her house in a quite deliberate manner. Earthenware was listed in the Pantry (while pewter was listed in the Kitchen),

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[42]See Chapter 5 for a detailed account of this room.
[43]SRO, 6000/15309, house sale catalogue.
[44]See Chapter 6 for a discussion of how spinsters, who were less able to use their homes for socialising, may have organised their homes differently to households with a male head.

china tea and coffee wares were listed in the Breakfast Parlour but the Dining Parlour had far more and of a more elaborate nature; a long list included a 'tea set of rich foreign china' plus desert wares, tea and coffee wares and a quantity of glasses.

Comfort

Virtually no textiles were listed, a Turkey carpet in the Dining Parlour and a carpet in the Breakfast Parlour which also had chairs with hair seats. No curtains were listed, although they were for most bedrooms. (Her will bequeathed linen and clothes to friends and relatives.)

Summary and interpretation

The arrangements of the living rooms suggest a reduced household due to Ann Fox's spinster lifestyle, rather than a poor one. As suggested in Chapter 6, independent women were at a disadvantage socially; even if they had the means to entertain there were social constraints on the kind of public role that their homes could perform. The aspects of culture and comfort are equally under developed in this household.

Richard Pratchett (1824)[45]

Richard Pratchett was a retired chemist, who owned land in Worcestershire and who lived in his own house, in a nice suburb in north-west Birmingham, before the area was encroached by the town. His purchase of five sittings at his church perhaps indicates that he had a family. He had a Dining Room and Parlour which were both entirely correct for these titles according to contemporary advice books.

Culture

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[45]House sale catalogue, BRL, MS1749/1(6).

The Dining Room had 2 silver medals of George III in black frames and the Parlour had a wax model of the Duke of Wellington also in a black frame. Both rooms contained numerous items in mahogany.

Comfort

The list of textile items in both rooms was more extensive than for ornaments, with both having chairs with hair seats, Kidderminster carpets, moreen curtains plus green silk curtains.[46] In addition the Parlour was made more comfortable with a hearth rug and two couches, although only covered in horse hair.[47]

Summary and interpretation

There was perhaps equal weight given to culture and comfort, although this is not at first apparent in the catalogue which lists far fewer ornaments in the rooms than textiles but at the end were separate lists of silver, bookcases and books and engravings (depicting a mixture of political, nationalistic and domestic subjects) in gilt frames, but it is not clear which rooms contained these items.

Ann Boulton (1832)[48]

Ann Boulton was the daughter of Matthew Boulton and she set up home in 1819, in her own house, Thornhill, which was a few streets away from Soho House, where her

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[46]These were probably on the lower half of the window to keep out the glare. For an interior of 1827 with these curtains see Mary Schoeser and Celia Rufey (1989), *English and American Textiles: 1790 to the Present,* New York: Thames and Hudson, p. 35.

[47]The use of hair seating in the less wealthy households indicates that financial considerations played a part in the selection of comfort items. Hair seating was practical, hard wearing and easy to clean. No inventory recorded the use of drugget, perhaps because it was a relatively cheap item, but no doubt many homes made use of this to protect carpets from crumbs, stains and excessive wear.

[48]BRL, MBP 286/23., house sale catalogue. Ann Boulton died in 1829 but the contents of her home were not offered for sale until 1832.

brother and his family lived. Thornhill had a Drawing Room and Dining Room which were nicely equipped to fill these functions.[49]

Culture

Two pianos were listed in the Drawing Room and a barometer in the Dining Room. Both rooms contained quantities of mahogany furniture. Other decorative items were a number of fire screens and brass curtain poles but no smaller items were recorded. A separate list of plated items and an extensive list of ceramics were recorded in the Butler's Pantry.

Comfort

Comfort was offered in both rooms with a brussels carpet and hearth rug in the Dining room which also had chairs with spring seats and covered in red morocco. 1832 was early for spring seats and Ann Boulton must have purchased these prior to her death in 1829.[50] The Drawing Room had a sofa with bolsters and squab and chairs with cane seats and stuffed squabs and covers. No curtains were listed although the curtain poles in each room point to them existing.[51]

Summary and interpretation

Ann Boulton's living rooms demonstrate her ability to function socially in a prominent way; her drawing room and dining room had the necessary character for formal/public entertaining. She had helped her father entertain friends, family and business associates at their home, Soho House, and on setting up home for herself at Thornhill, with her

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[49]Plans of the house also show a Breakfast Room but this was not listed in the auctioneer's catalogue.
[50]Thornton claims they were adopted by London upholsterers in the 1820s but were taken up slowly during the 1830s. Thornton (1984), p. 227.
[51]The bills exist for them as well. The gap between Ann Boulton's death and the sale of her household goods probably meant that some things had been dispersed by her family.

brother and his family at Soho House, it seems that she was able to continue to live a sociable life. It is a pity that her Breakfast Room was not itemised in the sale since this would have been the least formal and therefore the most private of her living rooms.

Jonah Bissell (1842)[52]

Jonah Bissell was a metal wares manufacturer, he had two living rooms; a parlour and a sitting room. The 1841 Census entry for his home lists only Jonah Bissell along with a clerk, who was perhaps his lodger, and a female servant. He was 69 when he died and so may have been a widower. His home was attached to his business with workshops and warehouse.

Culture

In the Parlour the furniture was all mahogany. There were a number of decorative items about which the auction catalogue was quite detailed; 'Pair of glazed medallions of George III, with small shell ornaments, tea bell &c., Stuffed pheasant, in glazed case, Pigeon and bantam cock, in glazed cases, Two paintings of the Woodman' also a 'Capital wheel barometer, by Pedretti' and 'Two best japanned trays, upon brass swivel rollers. Neat bronze coffee perculator'. In the Sitting Room all the furniture, except for an oak bureau, was in mahogany. It also contained many display items; 'Japanned hunting tray, Four Britannia metal candlesticks, Water jug and spar ornaments, Two stuffed woodcocks, in glazed frames'. The room also had an eight day clock and a barometer plus various tea, coffee and dining wares. China, glass and plated wares were listed separately.

Comfort

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[52]House sale catalogue, BRL, MS319/4.

The Parlour chairs had hair seats as did the sofa, with bolster and 2 pillows. There was a 'Green Kiderminster carpet and hearth rug' but only a blind was listed as a window covering. The Sitting Room had no textile items listed; the 6 mahogany dining chairs presumably had hard seats.

Summary and interpretation

Display was used equally in the two rooms but the difference in use of textiles indicates that the parlour was the more comfortable room, while the sitting room was a dining parlour type. Compare the living room in this inventory with those of the earliest examples, Susanna Marrian and James Eyken; the 'culture' elements had increased in number and variety, and 'comfort' items included upholstered chairs, that were missing from the eighteenth century farmhouse. Bissell had almost as much in the way of furnishings as Eyken, who was in the trade and showing off his wares. Even more telling is the comparison between Bissell's home and the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century homes of bachelors, which were examined in Chapter 6. The furnishing of Bissell's home shows clear indications of some 'feminisation' having taken place despite his lack of a wife and family.

Francis Harries (1848)[53]

Francis Harries had three living rooms at Broseley Hall; a rented house but an impressive one. The Dining Room seems to have been just that with only the addition of a writing table. The Breakfast Parlour appears to have been a fairly smart parlour since the colours mentioned are dark and rich whereas breakfast parlours in the first half of the nineteenth century tended to be light and fresh.[54] The Drawing Room was the most

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[53]Inventory, SRO, 6000/12839/3.
[54]J.C. Loudon (1838), *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion,* London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, p. 84.

remarkable room since it combined drawing room and library. Far more emphasis was given to comfort than culture but there may be some omissions from the household. Although the inventory was detailed the circumstances of the housesale might have resulted in some goods being removed or sold separately. Harries was bankrupt and he and his family went to live abroad after the sale,[55] he died a couple of years later.

Culture

There were quantities of mahogany furniture, and some inlaid items, brass curtain poles in all rooms, a pier glass with walnut frame and gilt ornaments in the Breakfast Room while the Drawing Room had a pair of terrestrial and celestial globes and a Wedgwood scent jar. Painted iron picture rails in all rooms suggest that pictures had been hung.

Comfort

Brussels carpet and hearth rugs were listed in all rooms. Curtains were damask in the Dining Room and Breakfast Parlour and Chintz in the Drawing Room. The Dining Room had chairs with horse hair seats, while the other rooms both had sofas with cushions and chintz covers. In addition the Breakfast Parlour had an anti macassar on the sofa, a footstool in needlework, chairs with cane seats and chintz covered loose cushions and a 'Crimson cloth table cover with amber silk lace trimming'. The Drawing Room had a hassock footstool, covered in needlework, with four green tassels and a ladies' work table with a crimson silk bag.

Summary and interpretation

The furnishings of these three rooms suggest that they each had a distinct character and ones which fitted contemporary ideas. The Drawing Room combined elements of both a

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[55]SRO 6000/15277 codicil to will found in Francis Blythe Harris' papers at Nice, after his death.

drawing room and a library; as well as the globes there were a 'Range of Oak bookcases reeded pilaster lipped crimson cloth shelves projecting out 11'3" by 8'8" high' and 'Portable Oak Library Steps crimson cloth on castors'. This combination of smart drawing room furniture with several ladies work tables, a cupboard for music and some serious library elements is in keeping with Clive Wainwright's ideas about the dual nature of some libraries in the nineteenth century.[56] He claims that the change began in the eighteenth century when objects other than books, such as sculptures and other artefacts, were added to the library, followed by more comfortable chairs. The examples of larger country houses of the aristocracy, such as Stourhead and Charlecote Park, that Wainwright considers, demonstrate that during the first half of the nineteenth century libraries, formerly considered a male preserve, were being softened and made into drawing rooms suitable for male and female and even family use.

Harries' inventory, dated 1848 and therefore late in our period, reveals the most prolific use of small textile items such as the anti macassar, several needlework covered footstools and lace trimmed tablecloth. It is difficult to say whether this is solely due to the date or whether it was a particularly detailed inventory.

To conclude this section on culture and comfort in homemaking practice, the evidence from the nine inventories needs to be summarised. Culture had a stronger presence long before comfort. The use of polished and exotic woods, particularly mahogany was much in evidence; polished wood was usually seen as having masculine qualities (hence the importance of mahogany furniture in dining rooms, the 'masculine' living room).[57] A

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[56]Clive Wainwright (1991), 'The library as living room', in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds), *Property of a Gentleman: the formation, organisation and disposal of the private library 1620-1920,* Winchester: St Paul Bibliographies.

[57]For descriptions of the differences between the masculine and feminine rooms and the importance of wood as a signifier of masculinity see J.C Loudon (1838), *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion,*

great many ornaments that were present in these inventories also had a masculine nature since they incorporated political themes. Ceramics were perhaps evidence of feminine interests in some of the inventories. When evidence of comfort is considered, male and female headed households appear to have had similar amounts.[58] It was textiles that were used as the chief way of distinguishing between rooms and how they were used. Comfort was most in evidence in the 'best' room which was also the room where most display was used, so that culture and comfort were equally important in these rooms. In addition many comfort items incorporated wood in their manufacture such as fire screens and footstools. This combination of culture and comfort was most in evidence in the last dated inventory, for Harris, where the 'best' room was a mixture of softened library and serious drawing room.

Throughout the period and for all the case studies it was evident that a room was set aside for formal use and social ritual; a room devoid of work and sleeping associations, this room also had the most concentration of display items. The aspect that changed was the greater use of textiles and therefore greater emphasis on comfort, as the period progressed and across the social status of the case studies. A more precise articulation of use, such as separate dining rooms, was evident in the wealthier subjects; Staunton, Pratchett, Boulton and Harries. Their rooms also seem to have had distinct 'characters' with which to project a different symbolic use; the dining room and drawing rooms adhering to the male/female characteristics described by Kinchin.[59] The last dated, less

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London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, pp. 88 and 96. Juliet Kinchin (1996), 'Interiors: Nineteenth-Century Essays on the 'Masculine' and the 'Feminine' Room', in Pat Kirkham (ed.), *The Gendered Object,* Manchester: Manchester University Press. Also Vickery argues that women took charge of minor purchases for the home, including textiles, whereas men made decisions concerning major investments such as expensive items of wooden furniture. Vickery (1993), 'Women and the World of Goods', pp. 280-281.

[58]The only bachelor/widower among the nine was Bissell whose inventory was dated 1842.

[59]Quoted in Chapter 1. Juliet Kinchin (1996).

wealthy person, Bissell, shows most clearly the best parlour described by Grier. Bissell's parlour seems to duplicate use with the sitting room, but the former was the room with the greater concentration of culture and comfort. This also fits with the findings in Chapter 5 on Social Status, with the lower middle class having fewer rooms and therefore the need to concentrate a number of symbolic functions, as well as practical ones, in a 'best' room.

The last dated inventory, that of Harries, in addition to the dining room, reveals two rooms which both contained comfort items, but one was for everyday use, while the other was for best and therefore also made greater use of culture. With the increased proliferation of cheaper textiles by the mid nineteenth century, homes could make more use of them to add to the physical comfort of the home but textile items could also be used, in combination with display items to express the complexities of the home at the point where public and private met, described by Grier as the tension between culture and comfort.

This section has demonstrated that the notion of separate spheres or the separation of the public world from the private one is over simplistic; the public world of work in the form of entertaining clients and business associates and the wider cultural world, had found a place within the nineteenth century home. Rather than divorcing the two, the early to mid nineteenth century home had increased the complexity of their marriage and strove to articulate their union, through a sophisticated language of 'culture' and 'comfort'. Women as managers of the home and guardians of its material culture were at the centre of this public as well as private world and played a vital role in its creation and elaboration.

Women as managers and guardians of the material culture of the home

Some aspects of homemaking were rarely recorded in inventories; consumer intervention and small items of little monetary value. Textiles were readily made-up in the home, made over into other items and small decorative objects could also be made to decorate the home like the anti-macassar listed in the Harries inventory. Textiles were important aspects of female participation in homemaking. As well as making clothing items, women had tended to take a more active role than men, in the purchasing of textiles for the home,[60] and had participated in the fashioning of practical items and the purely decorative; sheets, curtains, bed hangings and embroidery. Consumer intervention in textile furnishings will now be considered (using a variety of sources) by looking at women managing the practical aspects of furnishings in the home and their creation of purely decorative textile items. Although the practical and the decorative will be considered separately it must be remembered that practical items could be decorative and that both could carry symbolic and emotional messages.

Women as managers of textile furnishings - 'Making Do'[61]

It has already been noted earlier in this chapter, with reference to the earliest inventory considered, Susanna Marrian's, that although lacking textiles in the living rooms, the inventory listed numerous textiles in the house; window curtains and bed hangings in

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[60]Vickery (1993), pp. 280-1. Schoelwer has noted that fabric furnishings formed a larger proportion of women's inventories than of men's and suggests that perhaps women invested in household furnishings as they were less likely to own land or other major investments. Schoelwer (1979), p. 36. Berg's finding were less conclusive on this point, however she did find that textiles and clothing (as well as tea wares) 'were for women personal and expressive goods, conveying identity, personality and fashion.' Maxine Berg (1996), 'Women's Consumption and the Industrial Classes of Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of Social History*, volume 30, number 2, pp. 415-434, pp. 418-421.

[61]The title of a chapter in Grier (1988), p. 263.

bedrooms and linen. These textiles also included unmade-up cloth of various sorts; 'a pad of cloth.....4s, yarn of different sorts....£2 12s' and 'new cloth....£2 15s'. These items were listed with the linen in the Chamber over the Kitchen, which was also a bedroom. Although spinning and weaving just for domestic use was less common by 1770, Mrs Marrian would almost certainly have made up her own curtains, hangings and bed linen from bought cloth. This was also demonstrated in Joseph Priestley's inventory, under the heading Trinkets and Wearing Apparel, 'A Pair of Green Morine Window Curtains unmade.....£3 10s'.

Making up textile items for the home, as well as their laundering and repair, had always been part of women's work. Many of the domestic guides for women included receipts for removing stains and instructions for the washing, starching and ironing of textiles, there had however been less advice on making items.[62] This problem was addressed in *The Workwoman's Guide* in 1838.[63] This publication gave simple patterns for both clothing and household furnishing items for women to produce, as the author said in her preface 'in particular, that Clergymen's Wives, Young Married Women, School-mistresses, and Ladies' Maids may find, the "Workwoman's Guide" a fast and serviceable friend.' For women in households that could not afford the work of tradespeople, this book gave instructions on how to achieve fashionable furnishings. This was also mentioned in Loudon's *Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture*, where he recommended Thomas King's *The Upholsterer's Accelorator* for 'ladies who may wish to cut out their own curtains'[64]

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[62]As in the example quoted in Chapter 6, Mrs Sarah Phillips (1758), *The Ladies Handmaid,* London: J. Coote.
[63]A Lady (1838), *The Workwoman's Guide*, London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co.
[64]J.C. Loudon (1839), p. 1076.

Apart from the fact that inventories do not make clear which household furnishings were home made in this way, it is also unclear what such furnishings expressed in symbolic terms; good domestic economy, together with the emotional investment for the home vs. the desire for fashionable goods in the home that did not betray their amateur status.

Grier devotes a whole chapter to home-made textile items, recognising that this was an important site for the tension between culture and comfort; the use of the traditional female skills with textiles and needlework to elevate the everyday elements of the household. Grier has observed that: 'no one would have mistaken a set of home-made curtains for the products of a professional drapery maker who knew the secrets of cutting and construction.'[65] However such home-made textile contrivances probably existed in great numbers, although their survival rate has not been good.[66] This was due to the items being flimsy and most probably being used to the point of disintegration. Grier claims that textiles were often taken from existing items, perhaps second-hand furniture being purchased for this purpose, and remade into more fashionable items.[67] The surviving examples that Grier quotes are of rather clumsy construction and were certainly amateurish in nature, such as barrels cut down to make chairs, which were padded and covered with dress fabric.[68] Although Grier was concerned with American examples, which included rural areas where it was to be expected that people would resort to makeshift furniture, there are indications that similar measures were practised in England amongst the middling sort. For example the *Workwoman's Guide* showed how ottomans, a fashionable kind of seating in 1838, might be constructed using packing

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[65]Grier (1988), p. 263. Richard Bridgens provided a sketch for some curtains for Ann Boulton which included a note that they required 'more wire to make two full pleats at the corner'. Using wire would have given a professional finish to how the curtains hung. *The Workwoman's Guide* made no reference to the use of wires in this way. BRL, MBP 286/22.
[66]Grier (1988), p. 263.
[67]Grier (1988), p. 284.
[68]Grier (1988), pp. 273-7.

boxes. Although the *Workwoman's Guide* admitted that the more complicated aspects of the upholsterer's art would be beyond the capabilities of the ordinary homemaker.

West Midlands' examples of 'making do' are provided by the account book of John Foden.[69] Since Foden was not a fully trained cabinet maker and upholsterer some of his furniture making seems to have been amateurish in nature and perhaps customers asked him to construct such items because his daily rate was much cheaper than a cabinet maker's. In 1828 Foden took a chair to pieces for Mr Lowe of Stone, with the object of making it over into an easy chair. Foden added pieces of wood to the back and to make elbows, he used canvas and webbing in the construction of the upholstery and then stuffed it with 2lbs of horse hair. No mention was made of the textile covering. In 1853 Foden produced a makeshift item, although this time for the servant of Mr J. Gerrard, a druggist. This piece of furniture was a 'Close Box out of Packing Box' adding 'new lid moulds', a lock, hinges and handles and painting the finished item.

Due to Foden's ambiguous standing in furniture making he and no doubt many other carpenters and joiners, performed rather borderline professional/amateur activities; producing a better result than the homemaker but less proficient than the cabinet maker/upholsterer. This was also true of women who participated in constructing the textile furnishings of the home, in a professional capacity, as female upholsterers. These tradespeople seem to have performed a somewhat different role from upholsterers generally. A female upholsterer could be employed by middling people to a greater extent than more expensive cabinet makers and upholsterers, while still providing a skilled and knowledgeable service. The evidence for this work comes from the Boulton

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[69]St.RO, MSS 3161.

archive; Ann Boulton's employment of Elizabeth Cooke and from comments on the employment of female upholsterers, in Matthew Robinson Boulton's household.

Surviving bills and receipts show that out of the twenty-nine tradespeople that Ann Boulton employed in the furnishing of her home, she used the services of Elizabeth Cooke by far the most; twenty-one times between 1819 and 1823. Cooke's premises were situated in Canon Street, just off New Street, in the centre of Birmingham. which indicates that this was probably a reputable firm. It was more extensive than Elizabeth Cooke; some bills and receipts were signed by Sarah or Thomas Smith, and a number of them refer to a 'woman's time'. So presumably Cooke employed other upholsterers, particularly female, to carry out work, on her premises, as well as in the homes of her clients. Work for Ann Boulton ranged from making mattresses, and cushions, making bed hangings and window curtains for several rooms, to drugget for the Drawing Room, making carpet covers and making up 'scarlet curtains'.[70] Ann Boulton used Elizabeth Cooke extensively; apart from the twenty-one bills listing work, Cooke's employees spent long periods of time working at Ann Boulton's home. For example in 1823 a bill itemised seventeen days and on another occasion nine days, of a 'woman's time'.

Employment of female upholsterers is further illuminated through the letters exchanged by Mrs Wilkinson and Mr Westley,[71] concerning the furnishing and upkeep of Soho House, when Matthew Robinson Boulton and family were in London or at Tew Park, their home in Oxfordshire. A misunderstanding arose in 1838 about the employment of Apletree to make a bed for Miss Burgess's room. Mr Apletree was one of the leading

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[70]The colour indicates that they were for a living room rather than a bedroom.
[71]Mrs Wilkinson was Matthew Robinson Boulton's sister-in-law and acted as housekeeper, Mr Westley was his agent at Soho. Miss Burgess was a governess in Boulton's household.

cabinet maker and upholsterer's in Birmingham with a shop in New Street. Mrs Wilkinson wrote that they did not want Apletree to make the bed, but that:

> Having a female upholsterer in the house to make up a bed is not like employing any other upholder in preference to Apletree - and if upon consultation with Miss Burgess we agree to let the person you name make up the bed, it is only wanting a note to Apletree to say we defer his order till our return home and employing him upon the new bed for the Pink Room. - If we go to the expense it had better be for a best bed.[72]

A number of points can be inferred from Mrs Wilkinson's letter; that Apletree was too expensive to use for the governess' room, that they did not want to offend Apletree by employing another cabinet maker, that the female upholsterer, who Mrs Wilkinson did not even bother to name, was clearly in a different class to the prestigious Apletree. And most telling of all was the phrase 'having a female upholsterer in the house', since this suggests that the process involved in employing her was completely different from commissioning Apletree.

The Boulton's use of female upholsterers in their homes seems to suggest that they worked in homes as an extension of the household; somewhere between the external tradesperson and the internal servant. Through this intermediate person middling people were helped in the furnishing and servicing of their homes in a quite intimate manner while still achieving a professional finish.

Women and the creation of decorative textile items

The professional finish detailed above was desirable because it would have been more fashionable but also because this would have been a better demonstration of the culture

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[72]BRL, MBP 438.

aspect of homemaking; the refinement of the household environment. However there were also emotional aspects of homemaking to be taken into consideration which made 'home-made' desirable and therefore something to be celebrated. Textiles and the needlework skills of women were ideally suited to making items that added to the comfort and decoration of the home and women had long demonstrated their abilities in this way through making samplers and other pieces of fancy needlework and embroidery.

Rozsika Parker has claimed that all women were expected to excel at needlework since this was a demonstration of female skills which should come naturally to them. Parker argues that needlework, particularly embroidery, was used by women to question their position in society. Rather than accepting the position of being obedient and subservient to men, they used the imagery of their embroidery to express other female virtues; heroism and equality with men.[73] Until the nineteenth century, when, Parker claims women followed the strictures of domestic ideology without demonstrating the subversive tendencies of earlier periods. She contrasts the radical opinions of Mary Wollstonecraft, in the late eighteenth century, arguing against embroidery since it made women 'sickly and self-absorbed', with Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth's Evangelical ideas, in the early nineteenth century:

> More and Edgeworth claimed that embroidery practised in the right spirit made women into selfless, domestic beings and thus ideal mothers. The great upsurge of embroidery in the nineteenth century performed in the name of love (of home and husband) reveal whose arguments carried the day.[74]

The last sentence demonstrates, as elsewhere in the book, that Parker accepts the notion of separate spheres. Thus her acceptance of female docility in the area of embroidery in

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[73]Rozsika Parker (1984), *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine,* London: The Women's Press, p. 102.
[74]Parker (1984), p. 143.

the nineteenth century needs to be re-examined using the evidence of West Midlands women's needlework. Three types of embroidery work will be examined, samplers, other forms of embroidery and Berlin work. A conclusion can then be made as to the role of female embroidery as a contribution to the culture and comfort aspects of homemaking.

Samplers had long been used to teach young girls the stitches they would need to know for making clothing and household items during their adult lives, such as darning and embroidering letters for marking linen. While variations did occur over the centuries, such as the addition of signatures and dates from the late sixteenth century,[75] little seems to have changed during the period 1760 to 1860, except that their production was extended to working class children by the end of the period.[76] Parker's main point about the working of samplers is that they inculcated in young girls the need for obedience.[77] Hence the extension of making samplers to girls in state schools and orphanages in the nineteenth century.[78]

Fine embroidery was considered a female accomplishment, along with drawing and singing and was limited, as an amateur pursuit, to upper class and middle class girls. The cost of the silks and the leisure time to do extensive embroidery all required a good income. The sampler can be seen as a demonstration of a girl's accomplishments in embroidery and, according to Parker, her 'gradual initiation into full femininity'[79] but also it proclaimed a certain lifestyle. For this reason contemporary opinion was

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[75]Parker (1984), p. 85.
[76]Parker (1984), p. 173.
[77]Parker (1984), p. 81.
[78]A West Midlands example exists of a sampler made by a girl while attending St Clements School, Nechells, in Birmingham. This sampler was made by Margaret Josephine Gasken aged 7, it is undated but probably dates from the 1880s. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, no accession number.
[79]Parker (1984), p. 87.

sometimes critical of lower middling families teaching their daughters skills that aped those of the wealthier sections of society. The cartoon ridiculing 'Farmer Giles' for sending his daughter to a school where she acquired the accomplishments of a lady, shows the girl playing the piano in a smart drawing room while on the wall is a framed sampler. (See Figure 5:1) Since this example is a cartoon ridiculing ostentatious behaviour we can perhaps assume that Farmer Giles' display of the sampler, over the mantel piece in a gilt frame and illuminated by two mirrored candle sconces, was drawing more attention to the sampler than was usual.[80] A simple frame and hung along side other pictures and prints in a drawing room or parlour was perhaps more likely. West Midlands' examples of early to mid nineteenth century samplers show that the practice continued, in gentry and middle class families, for daughters to produce a sampler at a young age. (Figure 7:3) In some homes a number of samplers must have hung along side each other, at least until the daughters left home. The important point in this discussion of emotion laden textiles in the home, is that the sampler carried symbolic messages, but the tactile qualities of the textiles were contained within its picture-like qualities. Throughout the period samplers continued to be used as a traditional textile item in the home and as the period progressed this use extended through society, but it was other embroidery projects that had a greater impact, on changes in homemaking and the use of textiles in the home.

Many wealthy women devoted long hours to intricate embroidery for chair covers and bed hangings. Although such work produced a practical outcome, it was the skills involved and their leisure time that was significant, and this would have been recognised

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[80]Farmers were often criticised at this period for being ostentatious in this way, for example Parker quotes T*he Ladies Magazine* in 1810 being critical of farmers sending their daughters to schools to learn accomplishments like fancy work. Parker (1984), p. 152.

by visitors to the house.[81] Poorer women could not afford the time, or materials, for such extravagant embroidery. The emotional investment in such items of homemaking was probably also long recognised. In *Mansfield Park* Jane Austen indicated that producing textile furnishings demonstrated more than simply a woman's skills in such matters. Lady Bertram worked 'some long piece of needlework, of little use and no beauty' for many years without ever finishing anything due to her indolence and lack of interest in domestic matters.[82] The emotional content of textiles in the home was perhaps the reason for John Staunton's inventory recording 'Needlework hangings for bed', in a ground floor Store Room, along with odds and ends such as 'Coffee mill & 3 tin Lamps, Pewter wine strainer funnel, 2 mouse traps'. It was normal for wealthy women to spend years working such bed hangings which would then be handed down through the family.[83] In this instance perhaps the first Mrs Staunton had made them and they had been replaced with less emotion laden items, when he remarried.

Bedrooms had been the first rooms in the house to receive greater use of textiles; to make the bed more comfortable, and to gain privacy, first through bed hangings and then the addition of window curtains, but also to give symbolic significance to the bed. By 1760 the bedroom was becoming a private room and the drawing room or parlour had become the most important public room of the house. With this change also came the increased use of textiles to denote social and cultural importance to these rooms. Textiles had always been present but their use changed. During the late seventeenth century through to the late eighteenth century the use of textiles at windows, in fashionable and élite homes, was in the form of drawn up curtains that fitted into the window opening, or hung like a pelmet. The walls of rooms were sometimes covered in

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[81]Grier (1988), p. 267.
[82]Jane Austen (1985), *Mansfield Park* [1814], Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 55.
[83]Parker (1984), pp. 110-1.

silk fabric that was stretched over their surface. Neither of these uses obscured the architectural shell. Some upholstered furniture was present in such interiors but again this use stretched the textiles tightly to the furniture's form. Some softening had taken place in the form of floor coverings by the eighteenth century, carpets being used on the floor rather than on tables and chests. By the later eighteenth century fitted carpets were found in some rooms. Greater use of textiles was seen in the Regency period with continuous draperies and greater use of upholstered furniture (some couches for example had drapery attached to the bottom edge[84]) and this trend continued. By about 1840 textiles covered more surfaces with drapery softening outlines and there was greater use of small textile items, such as footstools, cushions added to already upholstered furniture and thick elaborate table cloths adorned loo tables, in the centre of drawing rooms and parlours.

As seen in Mrs Marrian's inventory, textiles were present in the parlours of lower middling households at the outset of the period in the form of a crisp white table cloth. In contemporary images of interiors such cloths were always shown with the deep creases produced by a linen press and no doubt this was meant to denote that the cloth was well laundered. (See Figure 1:1) This would have symbolised the housewife's skills in making and maintaining the household linen. By 1840 the symbolism of textiles had taken on fresh, and it could be argued, more complex cultural meanings.

The West Midlands examples of greater use of small textiles items, some of which may well have been home made, are provided by the Harries inventory which listed many items that 'softened' the interiors of the main living rooms. The increased informality that textiles gave to rooms can also be seen in the example of a surviving sofa rug at

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[84]Thornton (1984), p. 190.

Aston Hall draped over a sofa in the housekeeper's room. (Figure 7:4) A letter written in 1844, by Catherine Hutton, the daughter of the stationer and historian of Birmingham. William Hutton, listed the many textile and embroidery projects she had produced during her life; hangings, window curtains and white linen counterpanes for bed rooms and chair and sofa covers to form a 'complete drawing room set'.[85] The extension of embroidery projects to the drawing room, the ambitious nature of them and Catherine Hutton's social position as the daughter of a tradesman, albeit a wealthy and educated one, demonstrates the enlarged sphere of influence that women's embroidery was having, by the mid nineteenth century.

The introduction of Berlin work embroidery in the 1820s made a big impact on the quantity and quality of embroidered items for the home. The canvas work stitches were simple to execute and printed designs, with instructions, removed the necessity of devising intricate patterns. A trade directory advertisement in 1841 for a shop devoted to this branch of embroidery, the Berlin Repository in Worcester,[86] demonstrates its popularity. Also it is clear from the list of patterns stocked that Berlin work could be applied to many items for a fashionable interior; 'Ottomans, Chairs, Sofas, Cushions, Music and Footstools.....Rugs, Carpets, Table Covers and Bell Pulls'. A small Berlin work foot stool can be seen in the housekeeper's room at Aston Hall. (See Figure 7:4)

Parker draws attention to how popular Berlin work was, by quoting Davidoff et al:

> "Inside, soft, warm, brightly coloured Berlin woolwork spread over everything: over curtains, portières, pianos, anti-macassars, mantelpieces, tables, chairs, stools, screens, books, etc., providing a padding against the world outside, and emphasising

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[85]Catherine Hutton Beale (ed.) (1891), *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman of the Last Century: Letters of Catherine Hutton*, Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, p. 213.
[86]*New and Complete Directory of Birmingham and its Environs* (1841), Birmingham and London: Pigot.

how different were conditions inside where the lady of the house possessed all the virtues of domestic femininity."[87]

Both Parker and Davidoff et al are imprecise in their descriptions of the use of textiles in nineteenth century interiors, making rather sweeping generalisations in order to make their point. For example Parker makes generalised comments on interiors when it is important to be precise about the dates since the decorative schemes changed quite considerably during the early to mid nineteenth century. Such changes occurred even more between 1860 to 1870, the period when drawing rooms and parlours were at their most crowded. Parker tends to move from one date to another without acknowledging these differences. When Parker quotes Davidoff et al, she does not make clear what date these authors are referring to and in the preceding paragraph Parker uses Mrs Ellis' work from the 1840s and following the quoted section she uses Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando,* published in 1928, which talks vaguely about 'the nineteenth century'.[88]

Davidoff et al claim over-use of Berlin work. Grier's analysis offers a closer reading of the use of such items in the home. So for example, Grier points out that since such items were more about display than hard use, 'Berlin work usually embellished a limited number of pieces in a room, providing an accent or contrast to the larger decorative scheme.'[89] Grier has a different slant on the commercial aspect of Berlin work, making a connection with her culture/comfort argument. She claims that Berlin work was important for introducing the idea of a commercial form of embroidery to the homemaker; the kits supplied by shops were expensive and worked against the 'making do' aspect of many other forms of needlework.

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[87]Parker (1984), p. 158, referencing Leonore Davidoff, Jean L'Esperance and Howard Newby (1976), 'Landscape with Figures: Home and Community in English Society' in A. Oakley and J. Mitchell (eds), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women,* Harmonsworth: Penguin.
[88]Parker (1984), p. 158
[89]Grier (1988), p. 268.

Parker sees Berlin work as yet another instance of women in the nineteenth century being cajoled into conforming to a particular kind of femininity; the commercialisation of the patterns and the need to purchase a 'vast array of materials'[90] emphasised their willingness to conform. A different slant to the relationship between the symbolic and the commercial production of goods for the Victorian home is offered by Grier who claims that this in no way 'devalued' their symbolic use but rather made the symbolic 'language' available to larger numbers of people.

> The objects that bore meaning within the overarching symbol 'home' - its various furnishings - generally predated Victorian culture, although their availability was limited to families of means in the United States. The processes of commercialisation - the creation of a national framework of distribution, marketing, consumer credit, and sales - made versions of these furnishings readily available to the ordinary members of American society....Such commercialisation moved symbolic values throughout the culture, inviting broader participation in already established conceptions.[91]

If a shop like the Berlin Repository, in Worcester, was not available women could purchase embroidery goods as well as an increasingly varied number of finished items of textile furnishings from furnishing drapers. Small textile items were within the female province of household expenditure and no doubt the furnishing draper also provided a 'female space' for such forms of consumption, as suggested in Chapter 2.

Conclusion

The notion of separate spheres has been used to explain the role of women in the home in the earlier nineteenth century, and has designated that role as subservient to men and

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[90]Parker (1984), p. 170.
[91]Grier (1988), p. 8.

preceding the call for emancipation of women later in the century. The social and political agenda of these arguments have in turn produced a singular and negative image of the home environment; as a well furnished prison which suffocated its female inhabitants. Post Modern and post feminist theories have recently challenged this aspect of women's history and this has prompted new readings of the material culture of the home.

Using the notion of culture and comfort has allowed the increasingly complex symbolism of the home during the period to be examined. Rather than see the home as divorced from the public realm we should rather see the home as the centre of many activities in people's lives, both public and private. The combination of public and private produced a tension which had to be mediated through the choice of furnishings and their symbolic meanings. The use of textiles and the working of those textiles by women, was crucially important. Women did not simply add comfort with the use of textiles, as the proponents of separate spheres would claim, but also added culture, many items combining the two concepts. For example, the highly fashionable draperies at windows were sometimes produced by housewives, and a further dimension of the display, and therefore culture aspect of Berlin work, was the need for finishing or mounting the work. Many needlework items listed in inventories such as footstools or firescreens were encased in wood. If such items were home-made retailers like the Berlin Repository were employed, to make-up 'Ladies' Work', or an upholsterer might have completed the work, thereby elevating the material qualities of the object and its symbolic meaning.

The working of textiles by women in the home was a crucial contribution to its style and outward appearance, and the way the home functioned; quieter, warmer and more

comfortable. It is perhaps most remarkable that even homes without a housewife present were undergoing some softening by 1860. The feminisation of homes was not confined to homes with a housewife. Nor was this process an exclusively middle class development, by the later part of the period the majority of homes, whether aristocratic, gentry or middling, were conforming to the notions of culture and comfort.

CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 8

Conclusions

The two broad aims of the research are first to study patterns of consumption of furniture and furnishings during the period 1760-1860, and secondly, to examine the changing cultural meaning of the home during the period. These aims are prompted by the changes which took place in middling sort homes. During the period homes gained more objects which altered the appearance of interiors and allowed them to function differently. In particular textiles were used more extensively and in new ways which made interiors, warmer, quieter and more comfortable. Textiles played an important part in the other change to interiors, the use of a number of living rooms with distinct purposes and with decorative schemes which declared their function. The two broad aims of the project are to explore the link between these physical changes in the domestic environment and the social and cultural meanings of the home.

The approach taken is that of design history since this discipline emphasises the importance of the physical qualities of objects. Design history explores how the differences between objects, of materials, colour, style and quality, affect the cultural value of them. Design historians have generally concerned themselves with objects through the design, manufacture, advertising and retailing stages but not beyond. It was necessary therefore to add theories of consumption to understand the role furniture and furnishings played when they were in the home and used by consumers.

Theories of consumption within the humanities and social sciences prioritise each discipline's concerns. While this area of research has produced much that is of value in understanding the role of objects and commodities in people's lives three broad criticisms are made. Firstly that historical studies of consumption have focused

mainly on the eighteenth century and the twentieth. When the nineteenth century was investigated attention was almost entirely on the second half to find the origin of the present day consumer society. The social sciences have almost exclusively been concerned with contemporary society. The early part of the nineteenth century has therefore been neglected and there appears to be a division between the early modern and modern periods. Secondly, much of the work on consumption in the early modern period has utilised probate inventories to produce data on consumption patterns. Since probate inventories do not continue in any great number into the modern period other sources need to be found to span the period. A methodology needs to be adopted to deal with such sources to reveal patterns and explanations of consumption.

In looking at consumption for the home in the West Midlands using local suppliers, 1760-1860, a number of unique features are present. Firstly, a coherent picture of the changes that took place is presented without 1800 being seen as a moment of division between the early modern and the modern periods.

Secondly, this project prioritises provincial consumption. London manufactures and taste is usually seen as more important than that of the provinces, since it is argued that the provinces merely followed London's lead producing a watered down version of metropolitan methods. It is argued here that provincial taste, although linked to London methods, expressed a distinct taste through its market for goods.

Thirdly, a methodology based on qualitative analysis has been developed which allows a range of disparate sources to be utilised. Some of these sources have been used by historians looking at consumption patterns but with other agendas to my own, but other sources have not been used for studying consumption patterns.

Consumption for the home was considered through an examination of the furniture trade and its customers, people who were engaged in homemaking during the period. The West Midlands began the period with furniture makers in those towns with a strong commercial sector, while there were fewer, if any in the smaller towns. suggesting an urban milieu to be necessary for the furniture trade to flourish. Over the period the numbers of tradespeople increased far more in the towns with a dynamic population but also the composition of the trade reflected the nature of the population; a strong middle class presence was needed for trade to grow beyond basic provision and the more skilled makers required the patronage of aristocratic and gentry customers in order to survive.

The West Midlands was compared with the situation in the London trade during the period using Kirkham's research into the importance of the comprehensive firms which allowed the trade to meet increased demand, without the use of new technology.[1] The ability of the comprehensive firms to produce fashionable goods at competitive prices suitable for a largely middle class market were eventually challenged by the more dynamic furnishing drapers who largely bought in goods as required. Using evidence derived from trade directories for selected towns, Kirkham's findings were found to correlate with the circumstances in the West Midlands, particularly in Birmingham, but some qualifications were necessary; that the degree of comprehensiveness was perhaps more to do with labelling and the business methods of the trade directories than the actual skills offered by the firms. The division of the trade which grew at the fastest rate during the period was that of furniture broking, an aspect ignored by most furniture historians. By including broking in the Tables in chapter 2 the growth of different aspects of the trade and the organisation of the trade within towns could be fully appreciated as well as how this correlated with changing demand. Despite the growth of comprehensive firms, throughout the region there

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[1]Pat Kirkham (1988), 'The London Furniture Trade 1700-1870', *Furniture History*, volume 24, pp. 1-219.

continued to be a great variety of furniture making and selling offered, and this variety provided consumers with a rich choice throughout the period.

The lists found in trade directories were supplemented by the advertisements that were to be found at the back of some of these publications. The advertisements added another dimension to the picture of the trade, since they were produced by the firms as a way of representing themselves. The gradual move towards firms appealing to a largely middle class market was discernible as too was the increase in the split between making and selling. By the later part of the period the furnishing drapers were the section of the trade who advertised most. The furnishing drapers offered a new method of retailing, from a large stock, rather than a new method of production but it relied on an increased division between making and selling; the traditional set up which had encouraged a bespoke aspect to the work. Not only was this particularly suited to middle class customers but the advertisements also indicated that female custom was encouraged.

The people who provided examples of West Midlands consumers engaged in homemaking were examined through a variety of sources. It was stated that a 'more ethnographic approach' was desired following the suggestion, by Attfield, that this was the means of understanding consumption.[2] Since the people dealt with were all long dead the essence of the ethnographic approach was preserved by dealing with the consumers as individuals, using qualitative analysis rather than by reducing them to percentages as in quantitative research. The sample was divided along the lines proposed by Davidoff and Hall so as to allow variations in consumption practice to emerge.[3] An important qualification of their divisions was the suggestion by McLoud that people chose to affiliate with particular sections of society which was

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[2]Judy Attfield (1999), 'Beyond the Pale: Reviewing the Relationship Between Material Culture and Design History', *Journal of Design History*, volume 12, number 4, pp. 373-380, p. 377.
[3]Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall (1987), *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850,* London: Routledge, p. 24.

more subtle than class.[4] This was borne in mind when the biographical information on consumers was related; differences of location, occupation and social and cultural affiliations would all impact on how an individual saw themselves and how their home was furnished and used.

Location and social status were found to be influential in people's homemaking strategies. When considering the influence of location sources such as bills and receipts for furniture purchases and the account book of a furniture tradesman were used as a method of determining the nature of consumption in different towns, namely, Birmingham, Shrewsbury, Stone and Longton. Broadly, the patterns of consumption were found to coincide with the notion of the urban hierarchy, that consumers in towns nearer the top of the hierarchy were more fashion conscious and demanded a higher level of expertise from furniture makers than consumers in towns at the bottom of the hierarchy. However, the information provided in this chapter was found to be inconclusive, partly due to the small selection of data used, and partly because location was found to work alongside other factors, such as occupation and social position rather than on its own. While location probably continued to be a factor in consumption throughout the period, particularly for people in towns at the lower end of the urban hierarchy, it would not have been the only factor governing consumer patterns.

Inventory evidence was used to see if people conformed to consumption patterns according to their position in society and to test the theories of conspicuous consumption and the notion of a middle class culture of consumption. A selection of aristocratic and gentry consumers were included to see where divisions and similarities occurred. Evidence for ownership was derived from a number of types of household list, some were inventories, including some made for probate. Others were

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[4]Diana Sachko MacLeod (1996), *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

advertisements for housesales found in newspapers and yet others were the lists produced by auctioneers and appraisers for housesales. The main difference between these sources was that inventories were fairly comprehensive but lacked descriptive details. The newspaper advertisements were briefer but included qualifying statements about the nature of the goods. These discrepancies were allowed for and the differences used to advantage, to understand the nature of the homes they described. It was found that during the period there was an increase in the ownership of goods that Weatherill had designated luxuries.[5] Additional goods were included which had become more widely available by the later eighteenth century. A separate list was also used of 'old fashioned' goods to see if some people adhered to old ways of furnishing their homes. Despite the overall increase in the fashionable goods, and decrease in the old fashioned ones, there were distinct differences in the patterns of ownership. There were differences according to location and occupation, artisans and tradesmen in towns high up in the urban hierarchy were better represented than those in towns lower down the hierarchy or people in rural locations. How the goods were distributed in the home also showed distinct differences. When comparing the homes of people from all the social levels represented, the biggest variation occurred between those of the Higher and the Lower rank middling sort. The organisation of the homes of the Higher rank middling sort had much in common with the higher sections in society. It was suggested that this organisation of the home was even more important than the ownership of some of the goods since on this would have depended the possibilities for display and use.

The taste expressed in the furnishing of middle class homes was examined using nine examples for which a variety of detailed sources were available. A similar division emerged with the Higher rank who were wealthy and educated adopting élite and individual forms of consumption, rather than a particular style such as the domestic

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[5]Lorna Weatherill (1988), *Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760*, London: Routledge.

form of Romaniticism. It was the Lower rank consumers who displayed these characteristics with their limited number of living rooms that had to perform several functions. These rooms did not display a definite style but were perhaps more likely to conform to the 'explicit, conscious bourgeois values'.[6]

Once the stereotype image of the middling sort home is rejected the diversity of homemaking according to the lived experience can be explored. There was an overall trend in homemaking towards the feminisation of the interior through the greater use of textiles to soften the architectural features and to add warmth and comfort to homes. However, the various experiences such as marriage, the loss of a spouse, the continued single state, or a decrease in income all impacted on homemaking. There was evidence that makeshift methods were often resorted to for homemaking particularly by the lower middling sort, but also many people experienced mixed fortunes during their life which impacted on their households. Evidence for the homemaking strategies resorted to by independent women was examined through inventories. These women, below a certain income, were found to have reduced households which indicated a different organisation and use of the home. The possibilities for social activities such as giving dinner parties were particularly restricted. All these factors point to a normal experience for homemakers very different from the ideal presented in contemporary advice books. The stereotype derived from this ideal in secondary sources is therefore a rather unsophisticated reading of the reality.

The stereotypical image of the nineteenth-century home as the site of female oppression and the notion of separate spheres has been pervasive not only in social and women's history but also in histories of the home environment. When separate

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[6]J. Wolff (1988), ' The Culture of Separate Spheres: the Role of Culture in Nineteenth-Century Public and Private Life', in J. Wolff and J. Seed (eds), *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 129. Wolff was quoting Raymond Williams.

spheres is rejected and the notion of culture and comfort adopted, a fresh interpretation of the evidence becomes possible. It was found that 'culture' aspects were in evidence long before the 'comfort' aspects. When textiles were prominent in interiors it was noticeable that even then their use was incorporated into the already existing cultural framework. Women were the managers of the textile components of the home and contributed to the display aspects of the home through the production of embroidered objects and furnishings. The two findings which emerged are that the home should be seen as the centre of many activities, both public and private and these aspects were expressed through the furnishing of the home in ways that could convey these conflicting symbolic meanings. Secondly, the increasing sophistication of the social and cultural meanings of the home, was largely due to women, as the guardians of the material culture of the home[7] and their manipulation of the textile elements of the furnishings.

This project has found that the changes to the home environment happened gradually over the period, with the later developments being intrinsically linked to the situation which existed at the outset. This was no doubt partly due to the continued traditional methods practised by the furniture trade but more importantly to the traditional nature of homemaking itself. Despite the gradual evolution of the domestic interior the changes happened at different times for different people, the notion of a homogenous change from one style of interior to another was not apparent. This disparity between homemaking experience was discernible due to the variety of sources used and the qualitative method adopted for analysing them which emphasised the individual nature of homes and their occupants. Provincial homemaking was seen as a distinct market. Fashionable ideas which largely emanated from London were in evidence and knowledge of such ideas increased during the period but this did not standardise furnishings completely. This was due in part to the furniture trade still offering a

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[7]Amanda Vickery (1998), *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 8.

bespoke service and the additional repairing and servicing of goods which they offered. More importantly the provincial customers, particularly those in rural locations and in towns lower in the urban hierarchy appeared to be less concerned with fashionable taste.

During the period the domestic interior moved towards having more objects and in particular more textiles. These goods changed how the home looked and how it functioned. Within these changes many factors were at work which prevented a totally homogenous result, the main factors being location, social status and the influence of the lived experience. However, the over riding message is that the home was generally moving in the direction of being the site for more complex social and cultural activities taking place. The furnishing of the home accommodated these roles and made their symbolic function explicit and the use of textiles played a crucial role in this articulation of symbolic meanings. Women, as the managers and guardians of the material culture of the home, with their particular concern with the textile elements of the interior, played a crucial role in the creation of the home, and the evolution of a changing role for the domestic environment.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

The Database of Trade Directory Entries for the Furniture Trade 1770-1851.

Appendix 1

The Database of Trade Directory Entries for the Furniture Trade 1770-1851.

A database was created, using Foxpro MS-DOS, to gain an overview of the furniture trade during the period, its varying representation over the region and changes and developments in provision over time. The selection of information and the method of entering it in the database were chosen in order that certain questions could be asked concerning the trade. The process of constructing and using the database can be described under four headings; selection of information, ordering of information, how the database was used and the additional information that was used alongside it.

Selection of information

Entries for the furniture trade were recorded from trade directories, at approximately fifteen year intervals, for six locations in the West Midlands. The furniture trade was interpreted as the trades of cabinet makers, upholsterers, cabinet case makers, carvers and gilders and furniture brokers. The six locations were the towns of Birmingham, Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Bridgnorth, Stone and the eight towns that constitute the Potteries, namely, Burslem, Cobridge, Hanley, Lane End/Longton, Newcastle, Shelton, Stoke and Tunstall. A trade directory for Birmingham was found for 1770 all other locations were represented from 1783-5 onwards. The earliest directories listed all tradespeople alphabetically and the furniture trades needed to be extracted from the list. From the early nineteenth century the entries were arranged under the headings identified as constituting the furniture trade, or in some directories cabinet makers and upholsterers were listed together. The entries recorded in the database totalled 1084.

Ordering of information in the database

Information about the tradespeople was entered in the database using ten fields; reference number, surname, forename, area, town, number and street, date of the directory, occupation, directory name, and miscellaneous. The area field was required so that the tradespeople in the Potteries could be sorted according to the separate towns as well as aggregate numbers for the Potteries as a whole. The occupation field recorded the heading used by the trade directory. The miscellaneous field recorded any additional service or qualification that the directory listed. In addition the miscellaneous field was used to record the entries which had a woman's name listed in the directory.

How the database was used

Information was extracted from the database in order that certain questions could be asked about the furniture trade:

i. What numbers of tradespeople were in the furniture trade in the West Midlands during the period?

The data base allowed numbers to be extracted, for particular trades, over time, and for the various towns. Trade directories exist for the towns chosen for most of the period, therefore giving a single source of information which allowed comparisons to be made about the trade. The database could not produce exact totals for all tradespeople involved in the furniture trade. This would not have been possible even if the database had been extended to all trade directories which survive since that survival has inevitably been patchy and in addition tradespeople would have practised in the furniture trade who did not feature in any directory. This question was used to provide an over view of the trade, the totals for each town, and the total number of each branch of the trade in each town. The results are presented in Tables 2:1-2:7.

ii. Were there concentrations of the trade/s in particular streets of the selected towns?

Sorting the database by town and by street allowed the development of the trade to be seen in relation to the growth of individual towns. Concentrations of particular aspects of the trade in a town might indicate zoning of the town's manufacturing and commercial activities. Movement of concentrations of the trade, as streets changed in character over time, might reflect a changing status of aspects of furniture making. A split between making and selling furniture might also be indicated by observing concentrations of different aspects of the trade in streets which were predominantly composed of retailing or manufacturing. The results are presented in Tables 2:11 and 2:12.

iii. Were women involved in furniture making and selling?

The inclusion of female status in the miscellaneous field allowed female names to be extracted, to observe how many women headed firms in the furniture trade, in which aspects of the trade and whether there was a continuation of firms perhaps by widows and daughters.

iv. How was the organisation of the trade reflected in trade descriptions?

The headings used by trade directories together with the additional services or qualifications stated, were recorded in the data base under two fields; occupation and miscellaneous. Splitting up this information allowed a more complex analysis of the data to be carried out. The occupation headings used by trade directories could be used to ascertain the general development of aspects of the trade and how the directories described it over time. The additional comments, placed in the miscellaneous field, were analysed to gauge to what extent the headings reflected what the trade actually did and how much the headings were labels adopted by the trade directories. The results are presented in Tables 2:8-2:10.

Additional Information used alongside the Data Base.

The usefulness of the database was increased by linking the information it contained to other sources of information, about the trade and about the selected towns.

a) Population figures, taken mainly from the Census, were put alongside the data base findings to compare the growth of towns and the growth of furniture provision.

b) The 1841 and 1851 Census were used in two ways, firstly to find additional information about individual furniture tradespeople who were represented in the database. Secondly, streets where concentrations of provision were identified, were trawled through in the Census to find additional tradespeople who did not have an entry in the trade directories. This allowed a fuller picture to emerge of the organisation of the trade in certain parts of some towns, in particular in Birmingham, and to identify women working in the trade who did not have directory entries.

c) Trade cards and advertisements in trade directories were used to gain further information about the trade. All trade directories in West Midland Record Offices were used that contained advertisements. These sources were compared with the information in the occupation and miscellaneous fields, to see how the trade described itself, the services offered and the use of different methods/styles of advertising.

d) The Matthew Boulton archive (BRL MBP) includes approximately 140 bills/receipts for furnishings. These provided additional information about firms in the data base, a fuller picture of the trade in Birmingham and examples of bill heads which added information in the same way as the trade cards and advertisements.

e) The firms recorded in the data base were all checked for entries in *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers 1660-1840* (Beard and Gilbert, 1986). This provided further information since Beard and Gilbert had utilised additional trade directories which allowed a fuller picture to emerge of how long some firms had remained in business. In addition their researchers had gathered information world-wide, of other sources, such as trade cards, orders/bills for furniture and surviving objects.

The use of trade directories provided a common source of information about the manufacturing and retailing, of the commodities that had been identified as the most important for considering consumption for the home, furniture and furnishings. By organising such information into a database a framework for the West Midlands was provided. While most of the analysis in this project has been qualitative the use of a data base has provided a valuable benchmark of the trade, from which individual consumers made their purchases for homemaking.

Appendix 2

The Consumers: Manuscript Sources and Contemporary Publications

Appendix 2

The Consumers: Manuscript Sources and Contemporary Publications

Aristocrats and Gentry:

Charles Bowyer Adderley, Hams Hall, Warwick.
BRL, Norton Collection (2182) 820, record of a sale of furniture, (2182) 824 Family Papers.
Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 23/10/1837, sale of furniture.
William S. Childe-Pemberton, *Life of Lord Norton (Right Hon. Sir Charles Adderley, KCMG, MP) 1814-1905,* London: John Murray, 1909 (BRL)
Lord Berwick, Attingham Park, Shropshire.
SRO, Attingham Collection 112, Boxes 45, 49, 53.
R.B.W. Browne Esq, Caughley Hall, Salop.
Salopian Journal 24/7/1811, sale of furniture
Hon. Evylen Dormer, Welbourne, Warwks.
Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 15/2/1796, sale of furniture.
Col. Egerton, Severn Hills, Salop.
Salopian Journal, 11/5/1814, sale of furniture.
Army List for 1808 and 1813.
Edward Farmer Esq, Caldecot Hall, Nuneaton, Warwks.
Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 12/3/1770, sale of furniture.
Richard Grevis Esq., Moseley Hall, Kings Norton, Warwks.
PRO, PROB 31 436/91, inventory.
Worcester Reference Library, W.S. Brassington (1894), *Historic Worcestershire,* Birmingham: The Midland Educational Company, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton and Kent.
Hon. & Rev. A. Grey, Hams Hall, Warwks.
Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 10/2/1834, sale of furniture.
Francis Blythe Harries Esq., Benthall Hall and Brosely Hall, Salop.
SRO, 6000/12839(2) list of goods for sale at Benthall Hall.
SRO, 6000/12839 (3) inventory and valuation of contents of Broseley Hall.
SRO, 6000/15277, family papers.
Walford, Edward (1879), *The County Familiesof the United Kingdom,* London: Hardwicke and Bogue.
Samuel Hyam Esq., Spring Hill House, Birmingham.
Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 12/11/1849, sale of furniture.
Thomas Jesson Esq., Charlement Hall, West Bromwich, Staffs.
Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 8/3/1819, sale of furniture.
Walford, Edward (1879) *The County Families of the United Kingdom,* London: Hardicke and Bogue.
Fairfax Moresby Esq., Stowe Hill, Lichfield, Staffs.
Aris's *Birmingham Gazette,* 13/3/1815, sale of furniture.
James Wakeman Newport Esq., The Manor, Hanley William, Worc.

BRL, MS 394886, inventory.
Walford, Edward (1879), *The County Families of the United Kingdom,* London: Hardicke and Bogue.
Sir Herbert Perrott Pakington, Westwood House, Worcestershire.
WRO BA4739 parcel 1(viii), inventory of Westwood House.
Burke, John (1837), *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry,* London: Henry Colburn.
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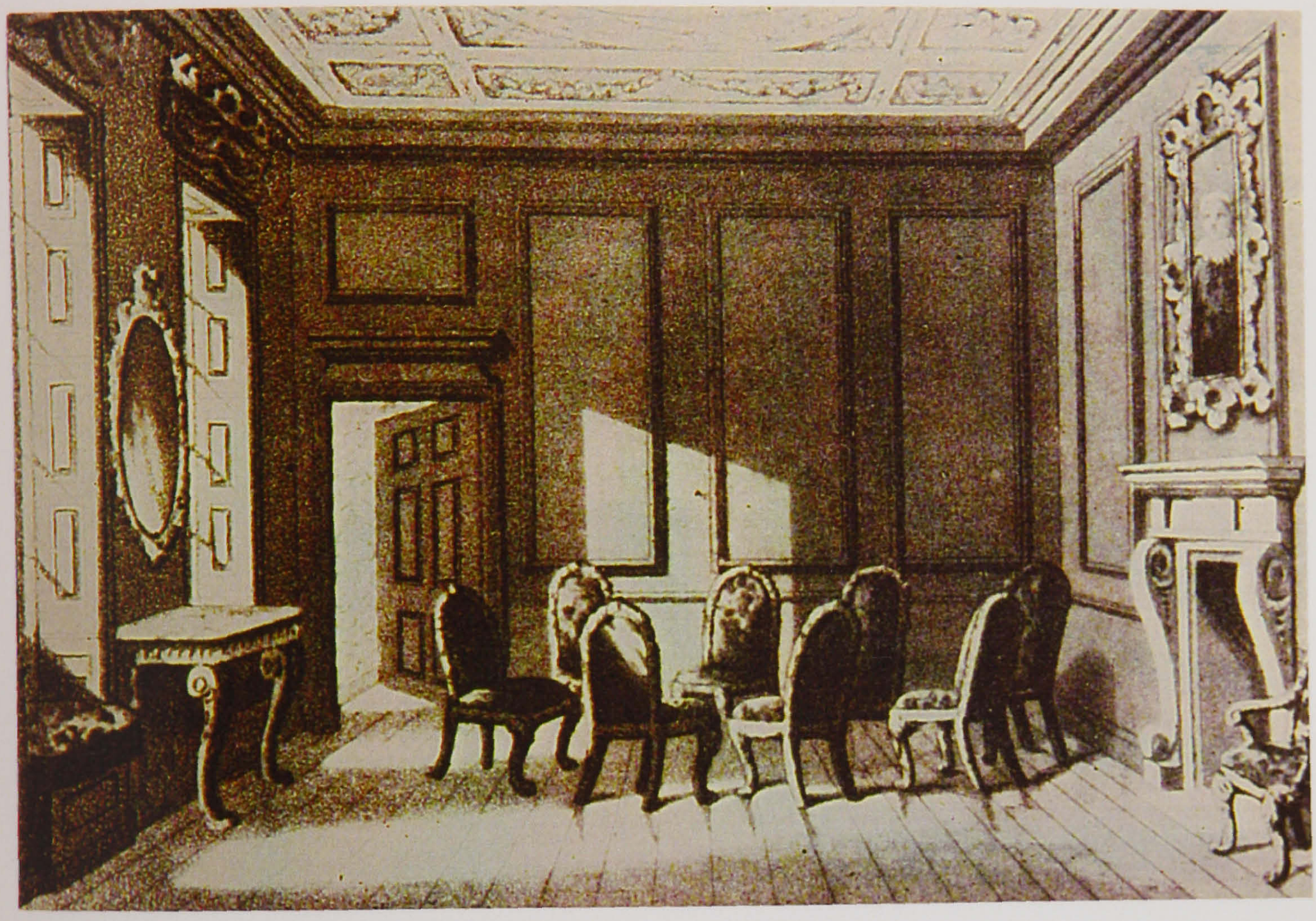

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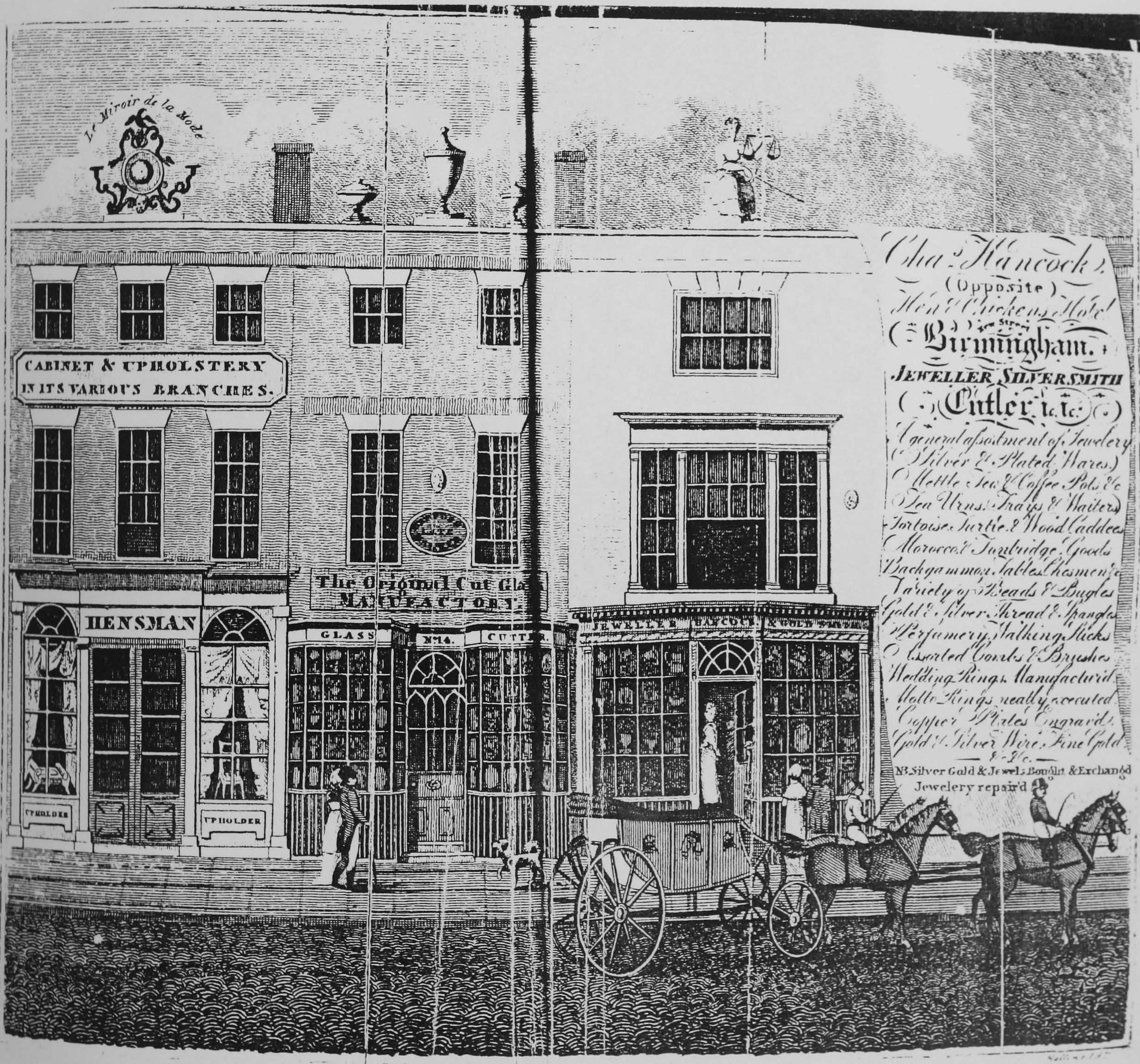

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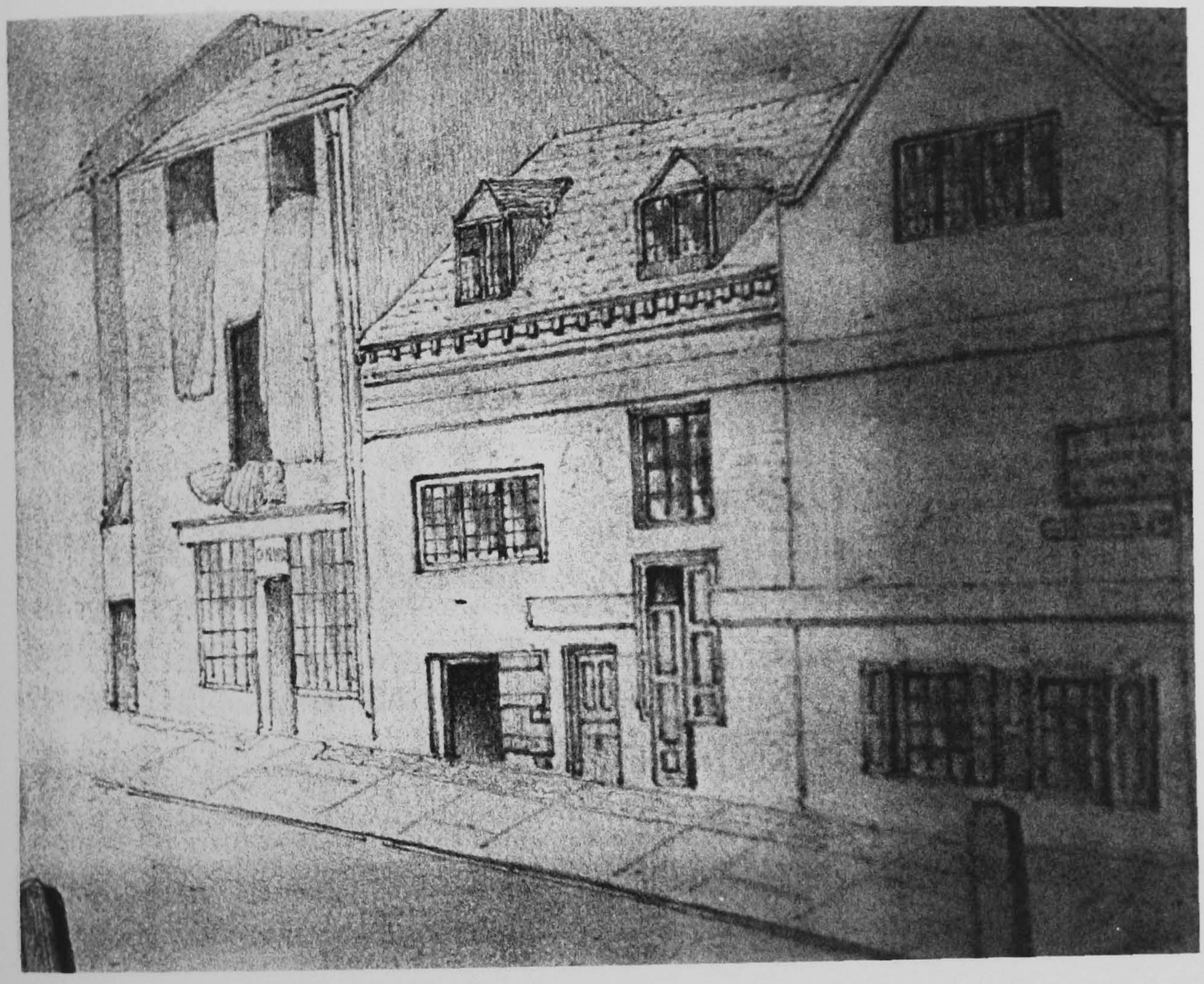

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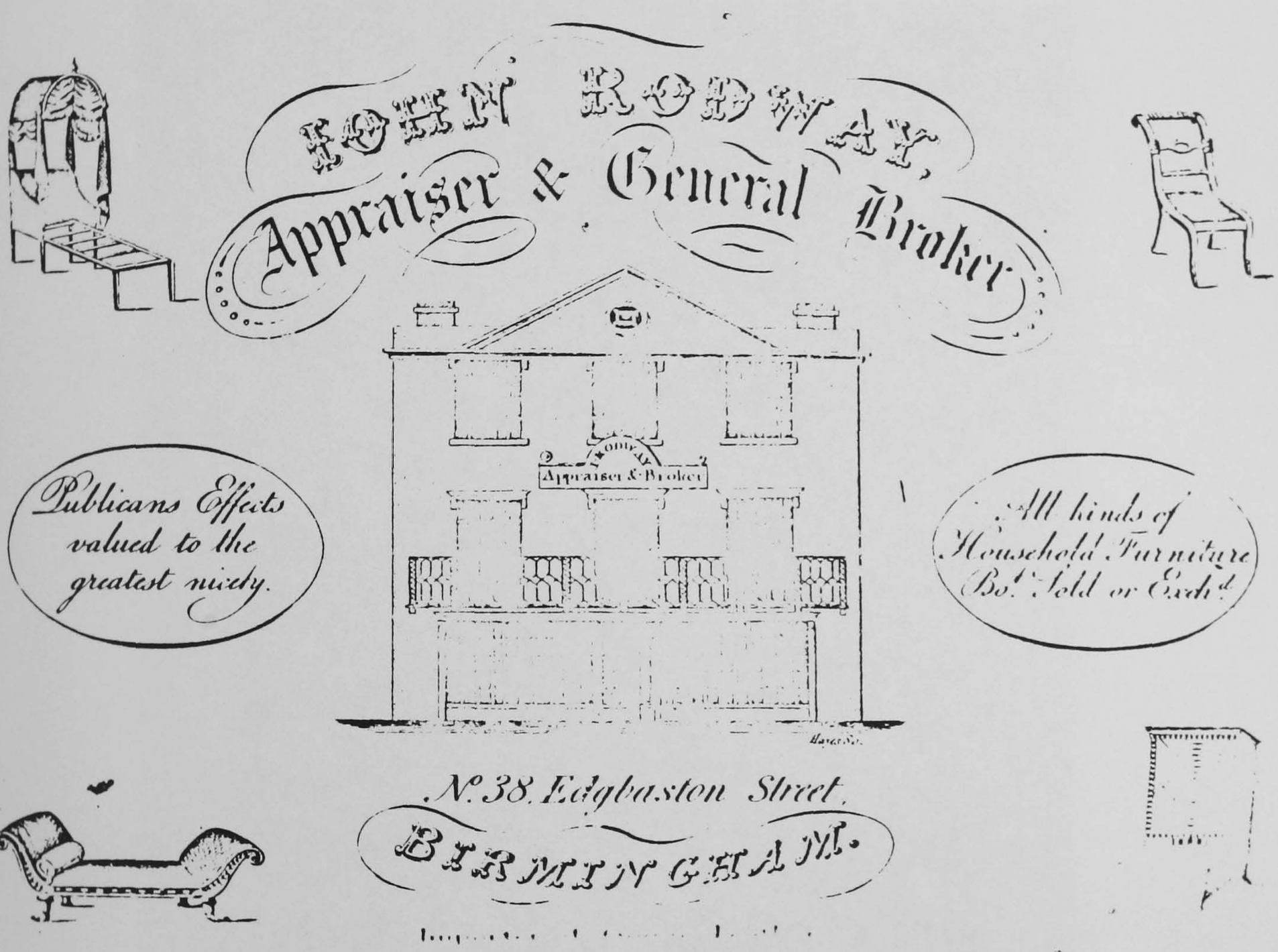

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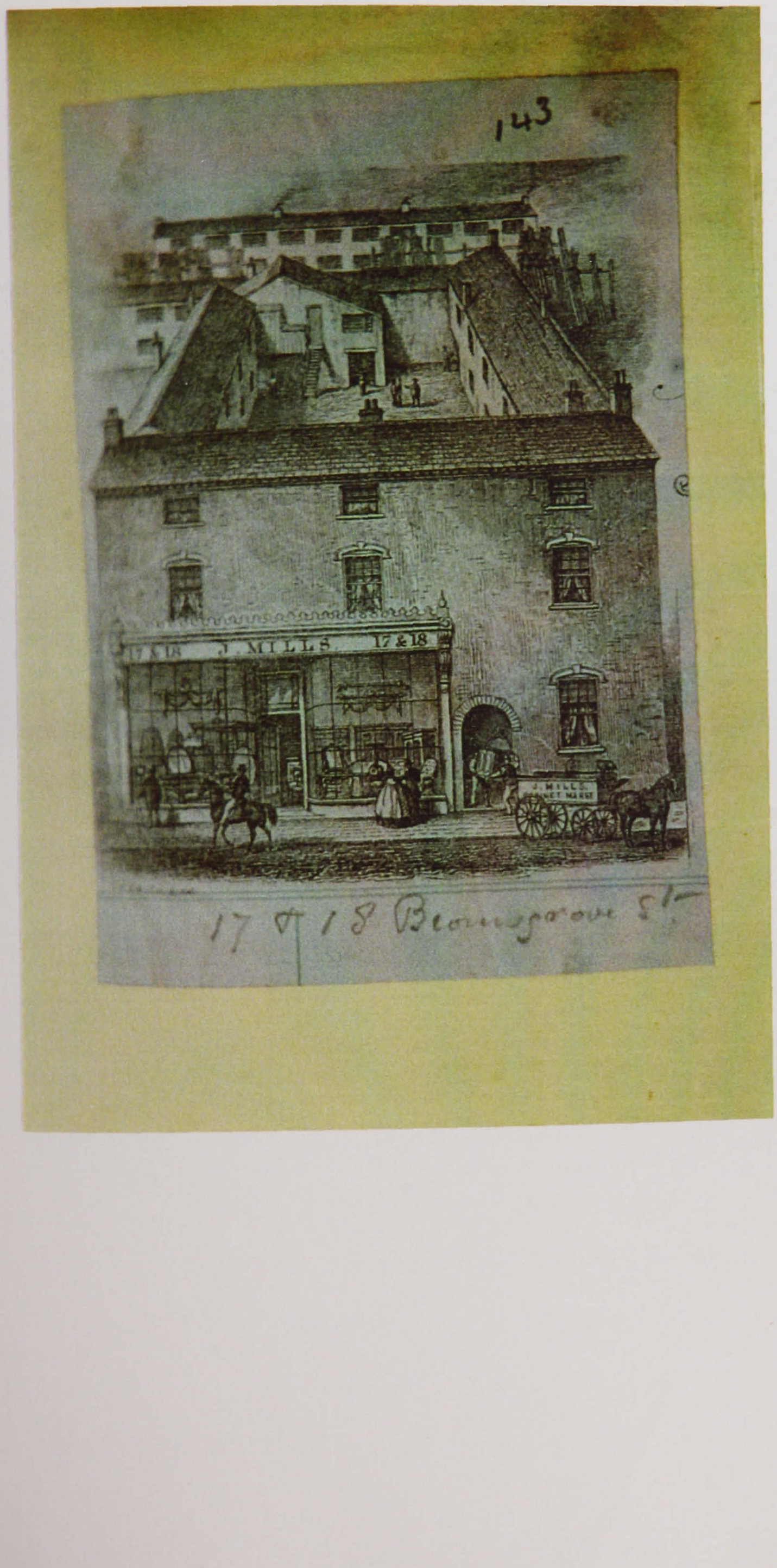

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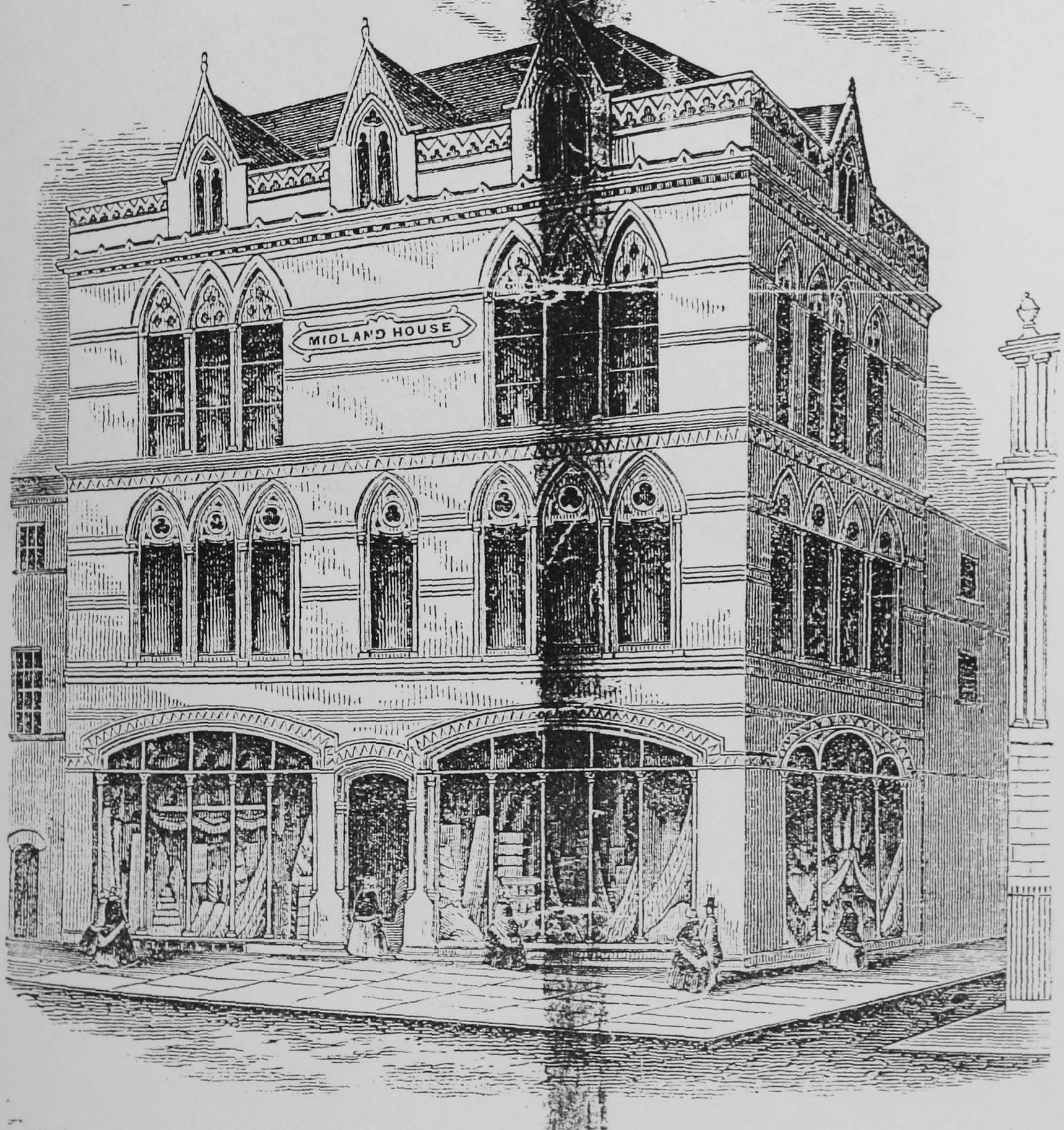

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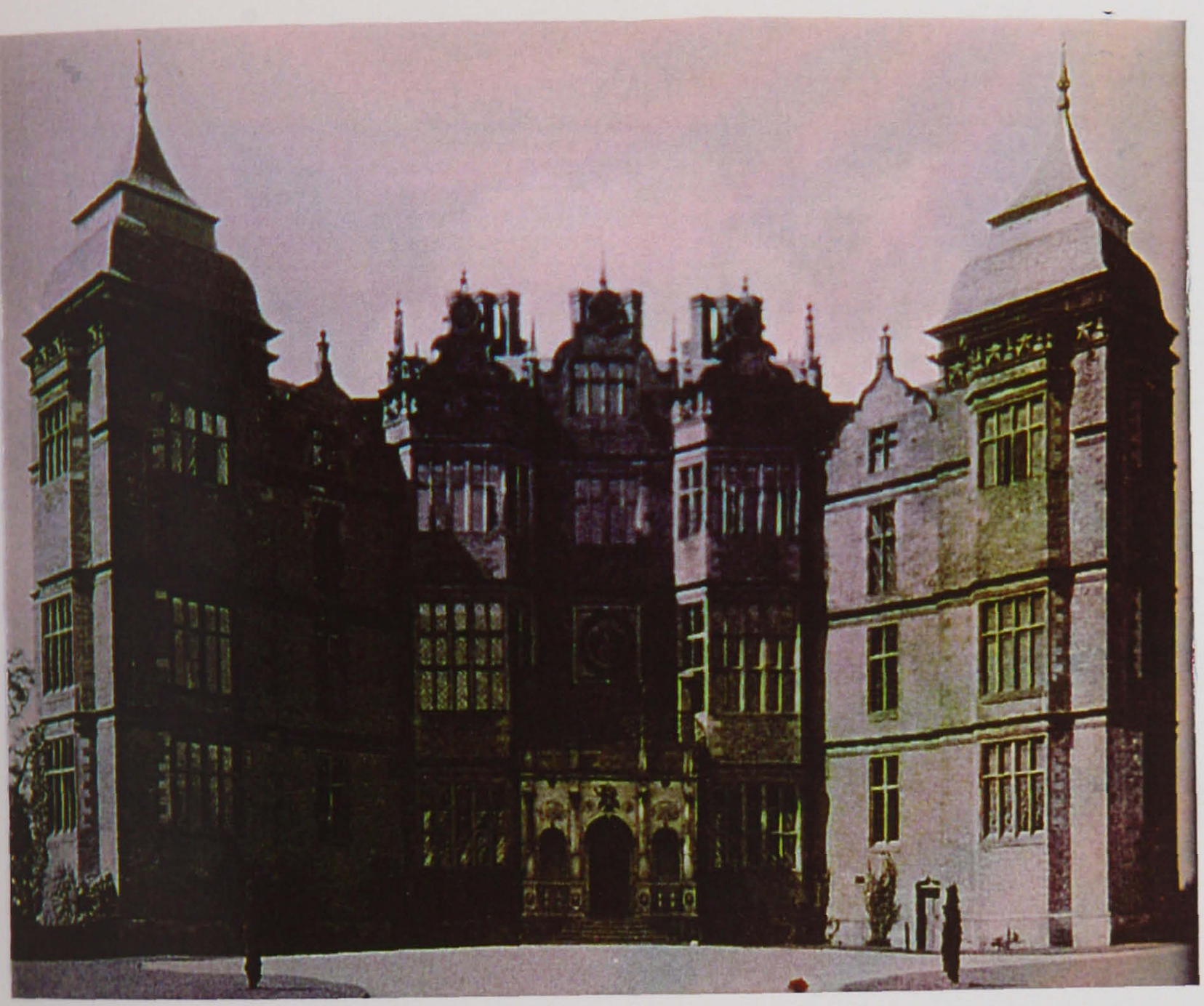

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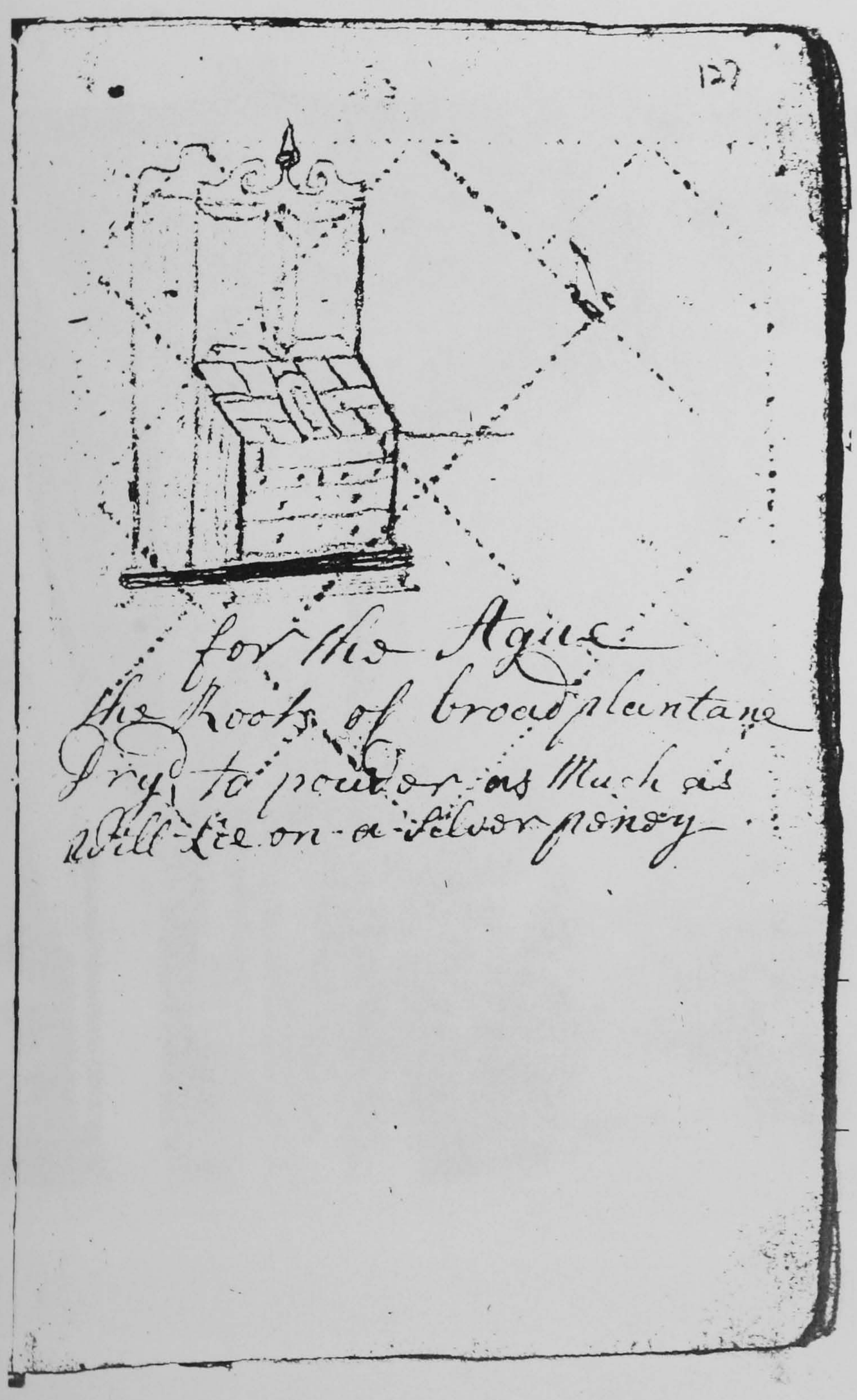

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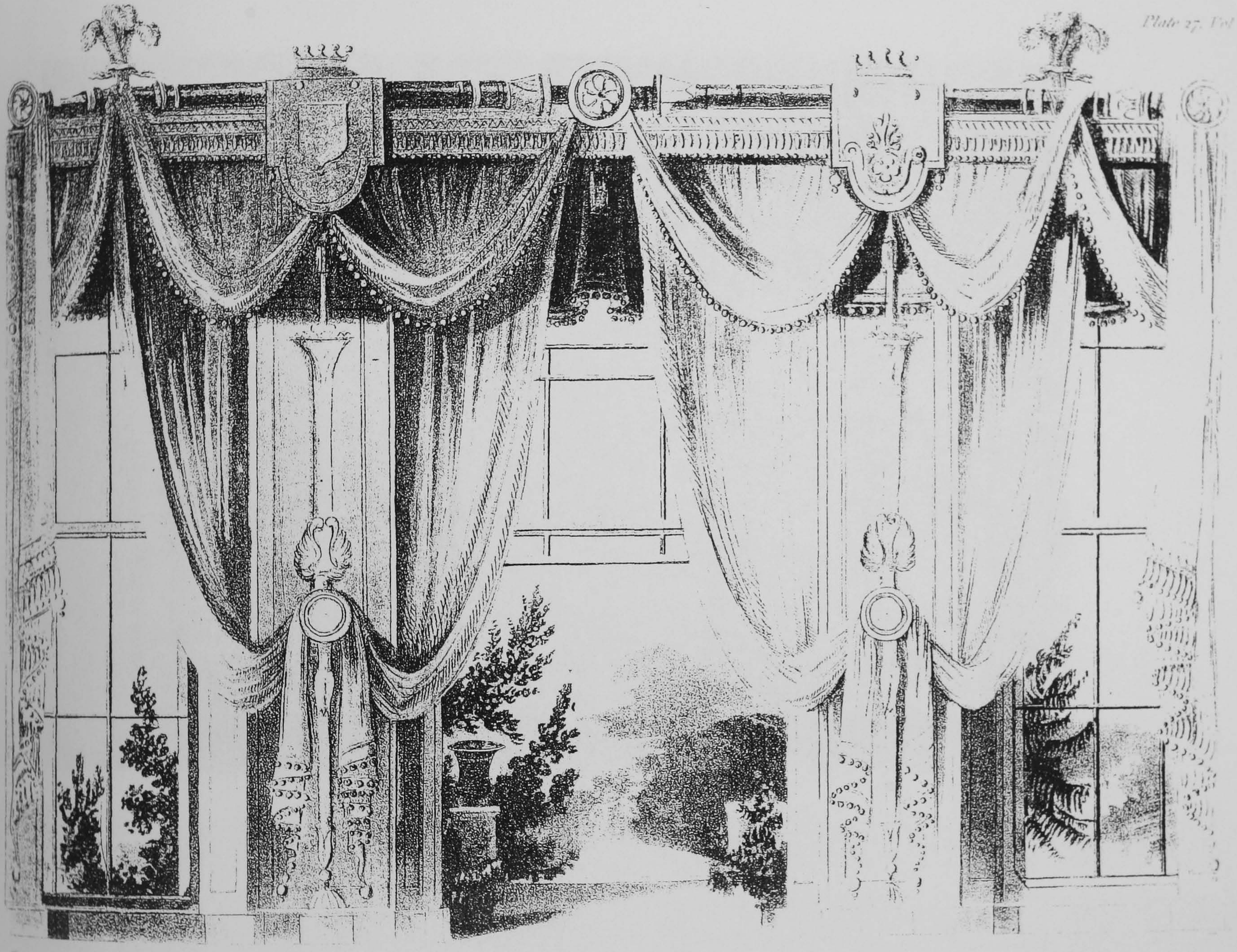

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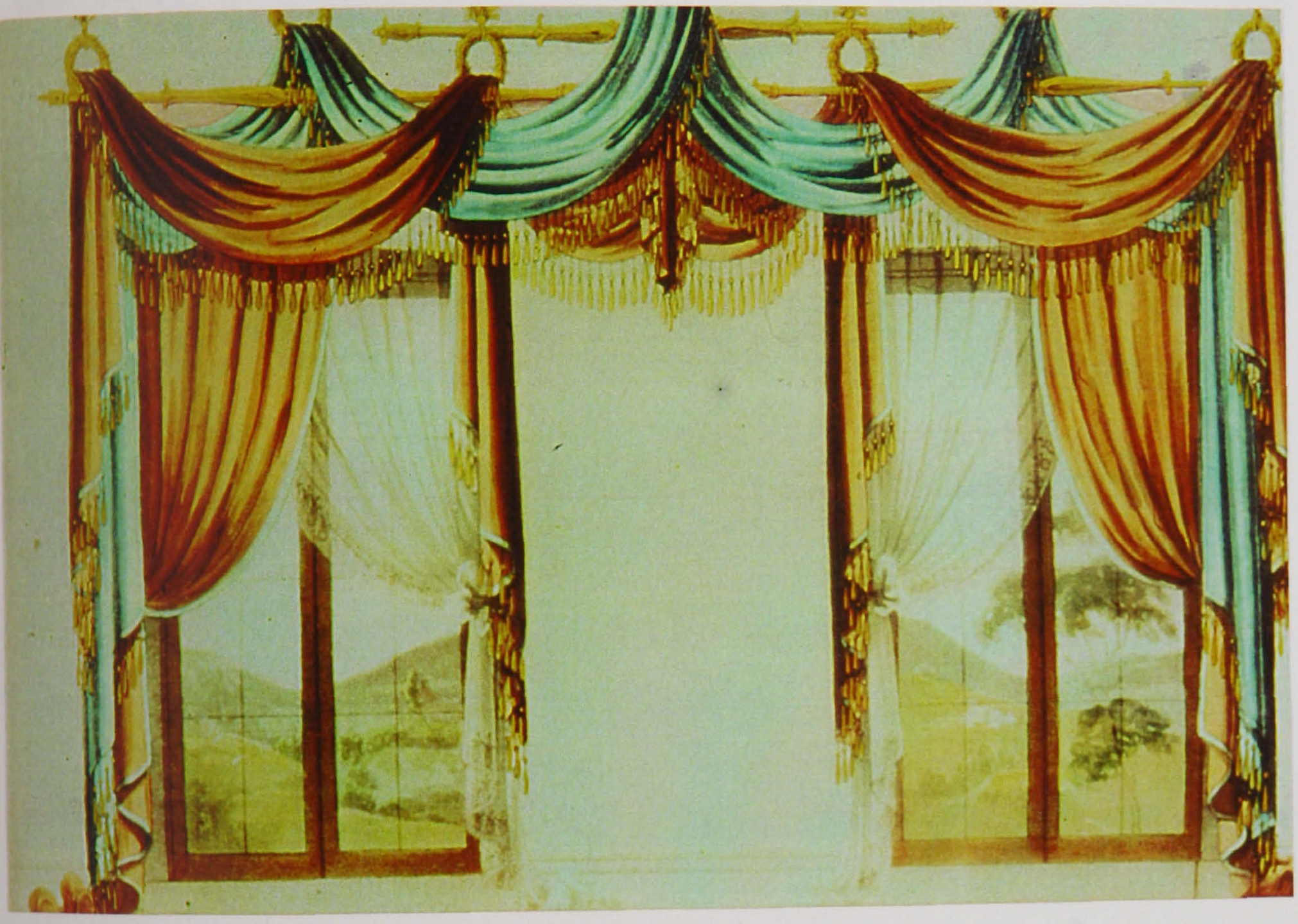

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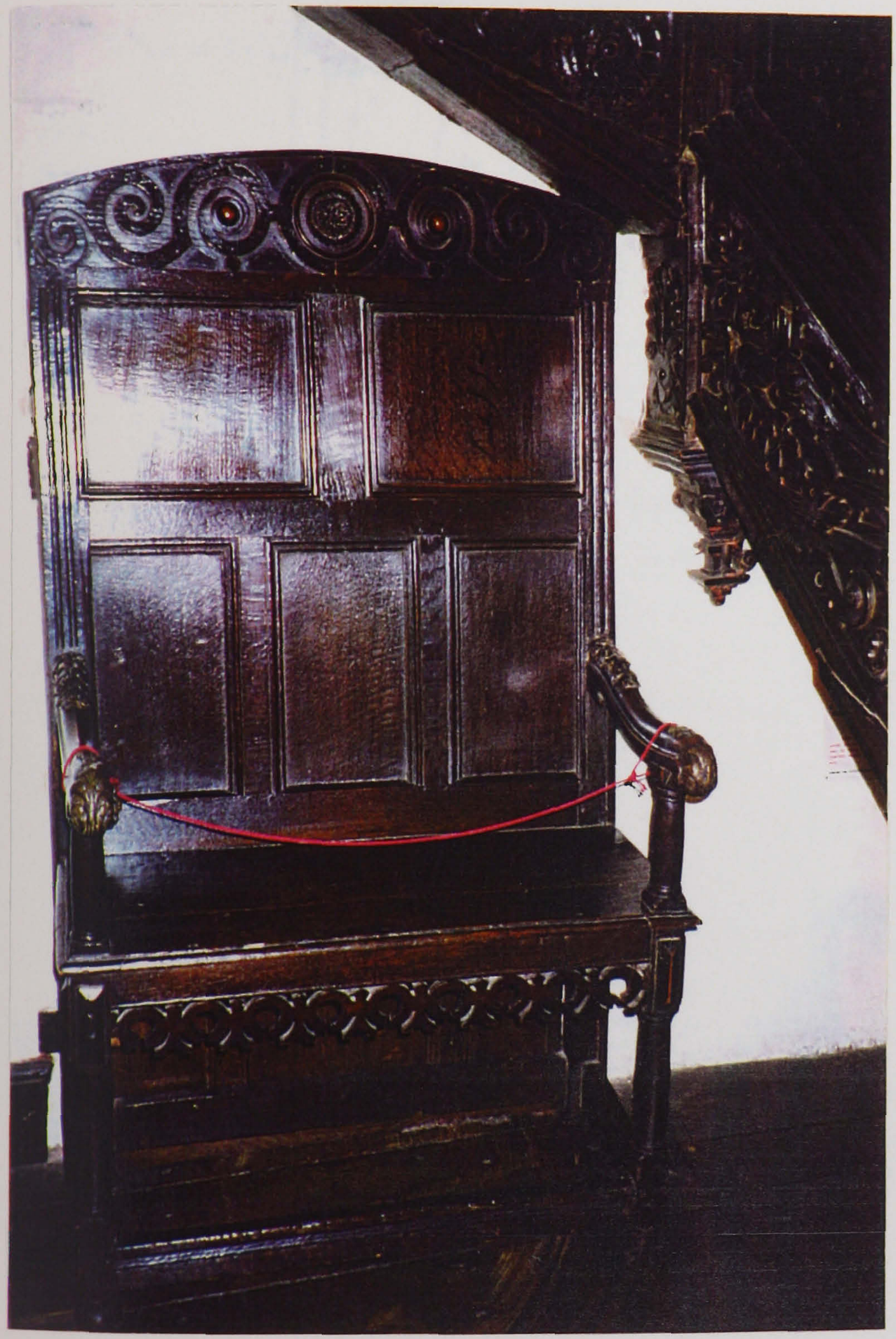

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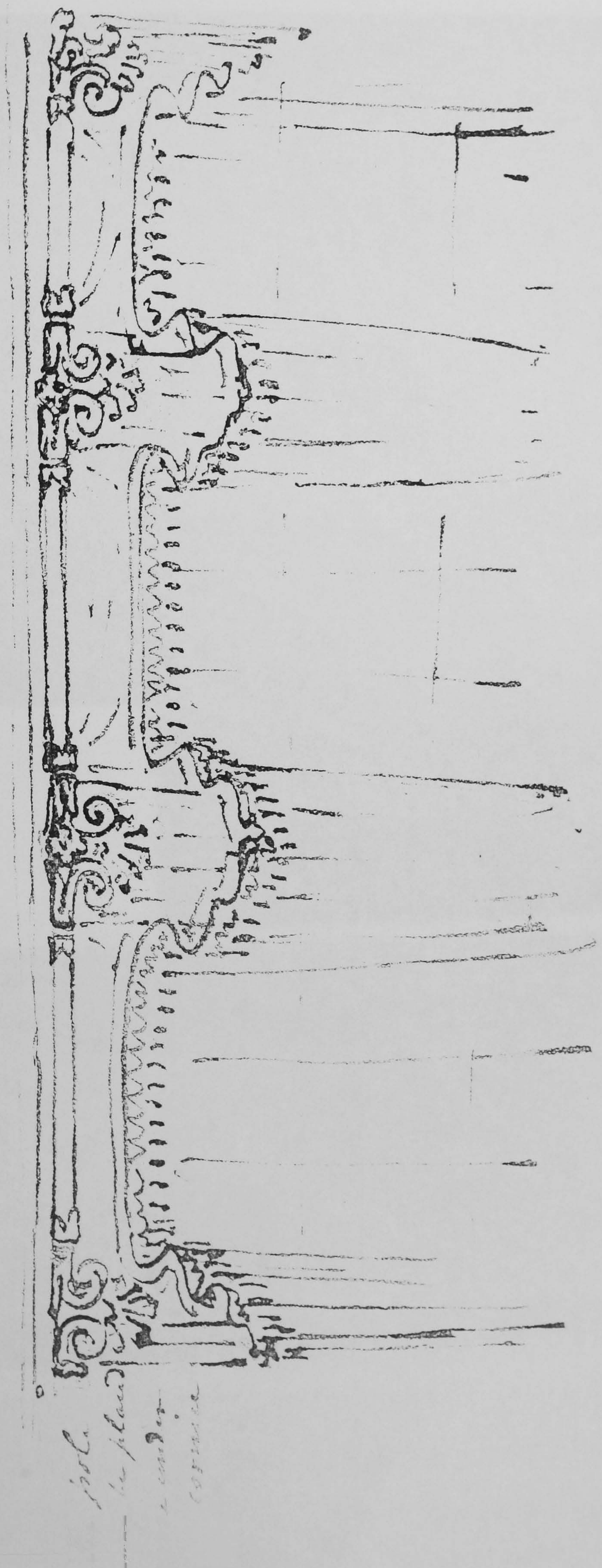

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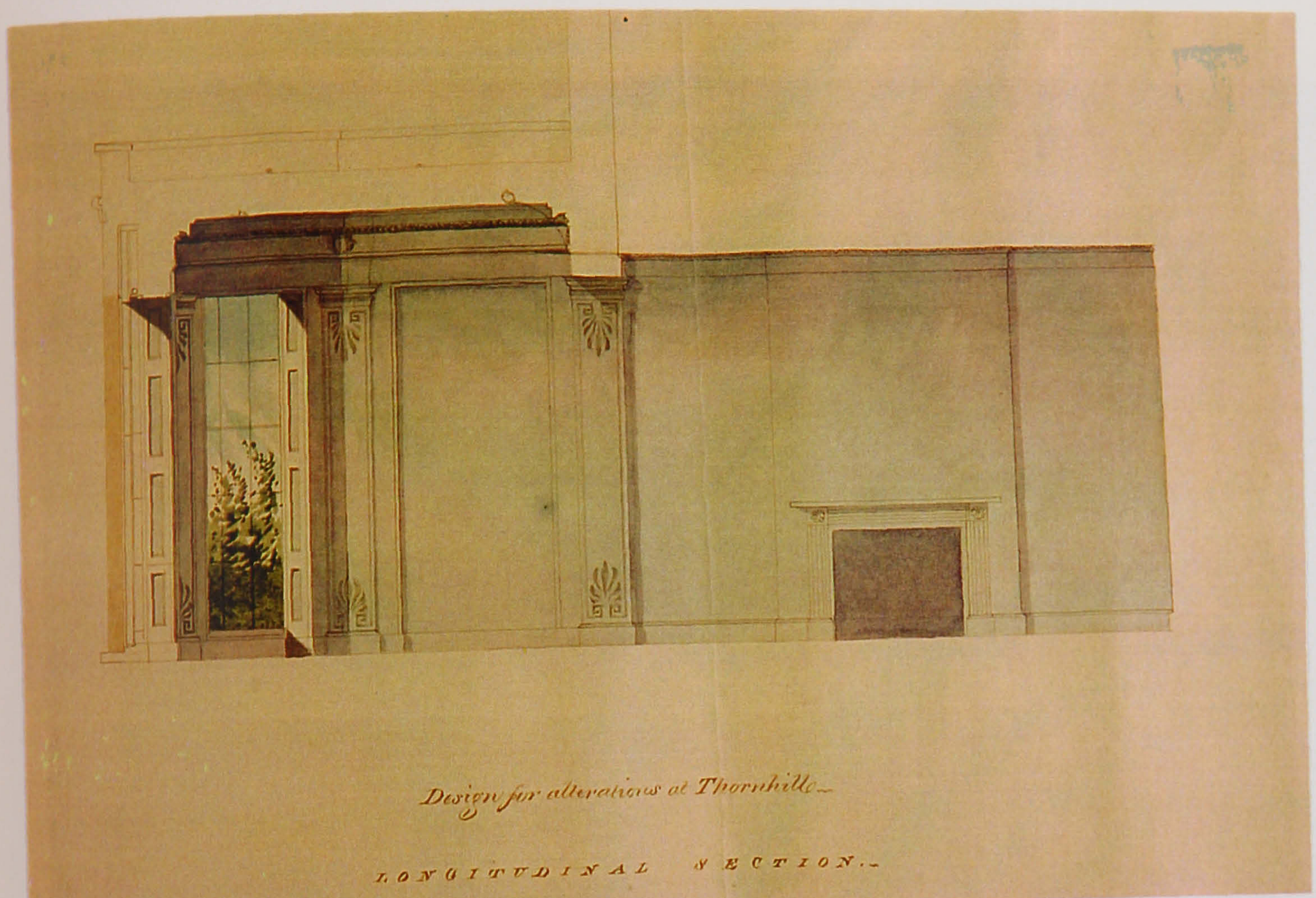

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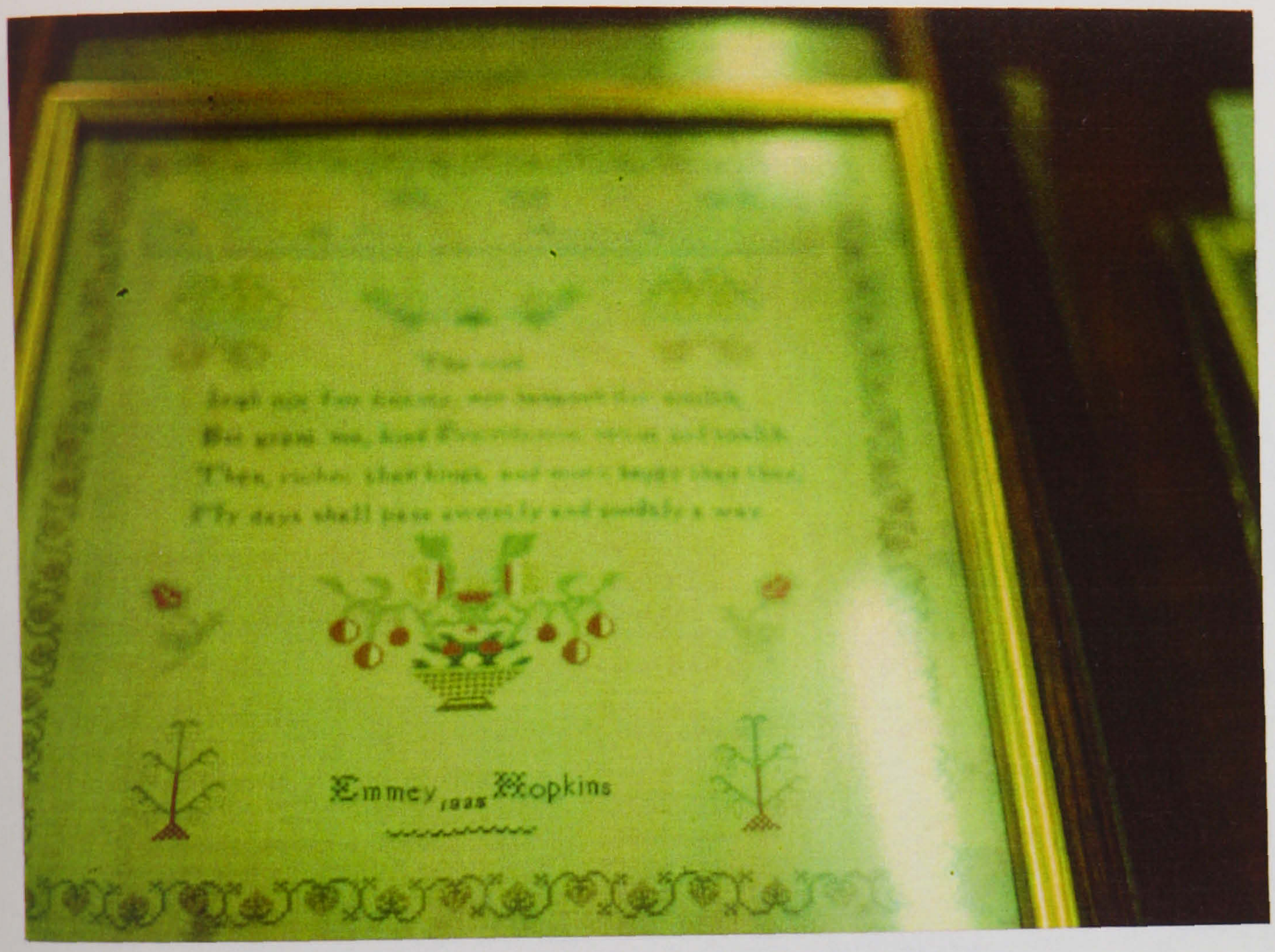

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